THE ART OF
DRAGON AGE™
THE VEILGUARD

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SPECIAL THANKS

A legion of artists, animators, and other specialists have contributed to the world of Dragon Age *over the past two decades, and so we'd like to acknowledge the efforts of the* Dragon Age *team, both past and present, and everyone who made this book possible. We'd furthermore like to thank the DICE Frostbite team, the Volta team, the EASH team, the Sperasoft team, the Roarty Digital team, the Elite 3D team, the Mindwalk team, the Arts United team, the House of Cool team, and the Lift Interactive team for their contributions to* Dragon Age: The Veilguard*.*

THE ART OF DRAGON AGE: THE VEILGUARD

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FOREWORD

Dragon Age: The Veilguard was a special project, and so it requires a special art book.

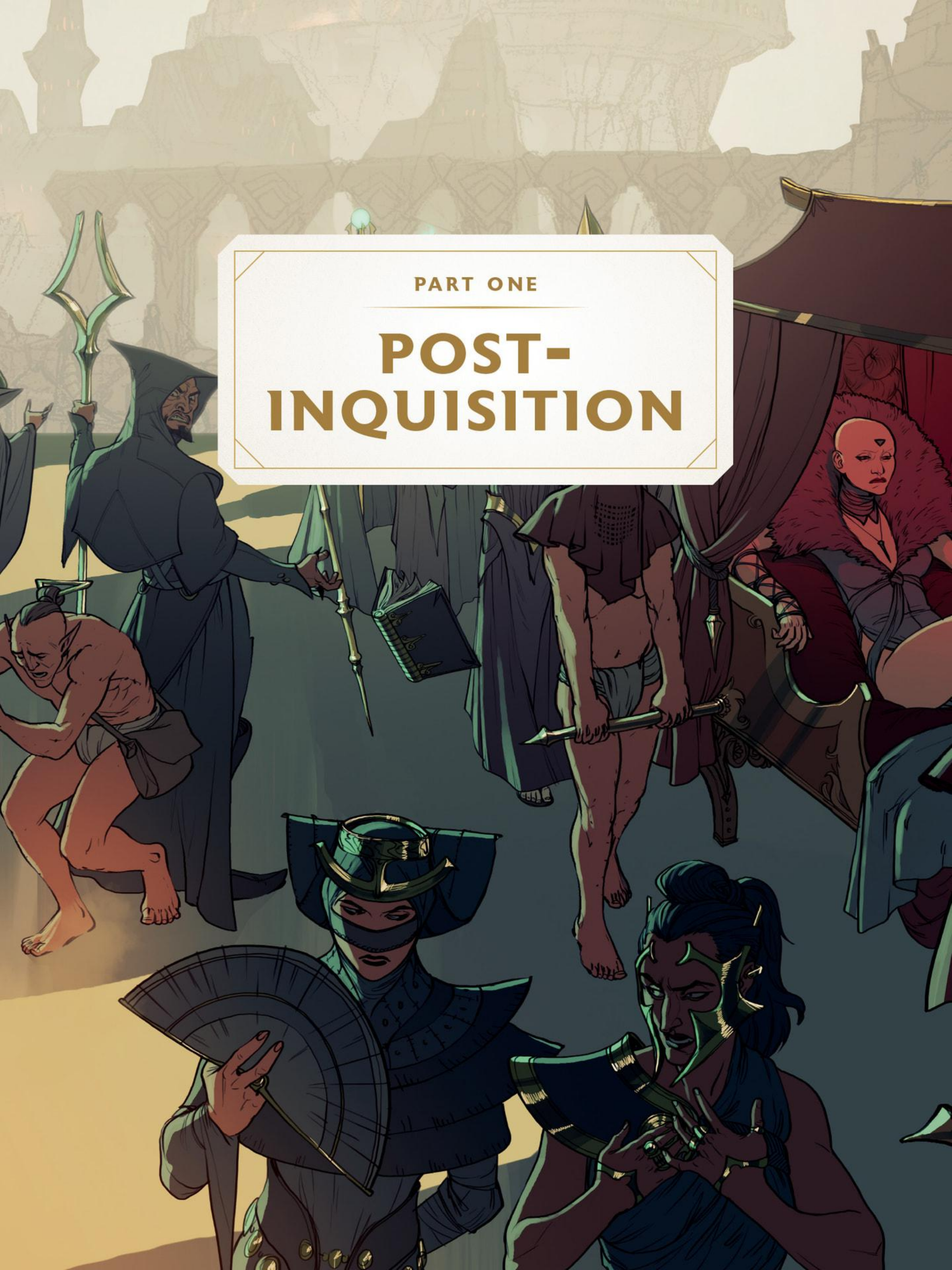
More concept art was made for *Veilguard* than the rest of the *Dragon Age* series combined (and very likely the *Mass Effect* trilogy as well). This is one of the surprising advantages of being in some stage of development for nearly a decade. To organize this huge collection—and to bring you along on the twists and turns of our journey—we have divided the book into three major eras: post-*Inquisition*, Joplin, and *Veilguard*. The post-*Inquisition* stage includes the earliest work we did from before *Inquisition* was even out the door until the official sequel was given the code name "Joplin." This was meant to be the direct sequel, and much of what was planned out during the Joplin years remained relevant to the end. After Joplin was halted to shift the focus to *Mass Effect: Andromeda*, the project changed course and was given the code name "Morrison." This live-service version of the game eventually pivoted back to being a single-player experience. Each of these stages had different design requirements, but because we didn't start from scratch, we had the advantage of building on previous work.

Our goal was to create a *Dragon Age* game that was respectful to the world the fans of the series knew and also a refreshing and exciting addition. We also knew that we were going to realize parts of Thedas that had only been hinted at in previous games. It's one thing to imagine the Tevinter Imperium; it's another thing to walk down the streets yourself. Whatever we designed, we tried to stay true to established lore while also attempting to exceed expectations. Each region was given its own design language and recognizable motifs to try to make sure that every location, character, prop, etc., fit into its place and helped to create a rich and enticing world for players to immerse themselves in.

One artist can make a painting, but it takes a huge team to build a cathedral, something no single person could achieve on their own. While a colossal amount of creativity goes into video games, they are a lot more like cathedrals than paintings. They require years of cooperation between many disciplines, from animation to writing to audio to many, many more. In many ways, we see the final game as the completed work of art: the finished cathedral. Art books like this one are the perfect opportunity to showcase what you don't see in the finished product: the inspiration, the blueprints, the unused drafts. We barked up a lot of wrong trees. We explored some wild directions—some ending in dead ends, others ending in precious treasure. We also created a lot of material that we liked but didn't have the capacity to build (in this game, anyway). We decided to cram as much art as we reasonably could into these pages. Maybe one day we'll be able to make the eighty-pound edition, but until then, we sincerely hope you enjoy this glimpse at the art behind the art.

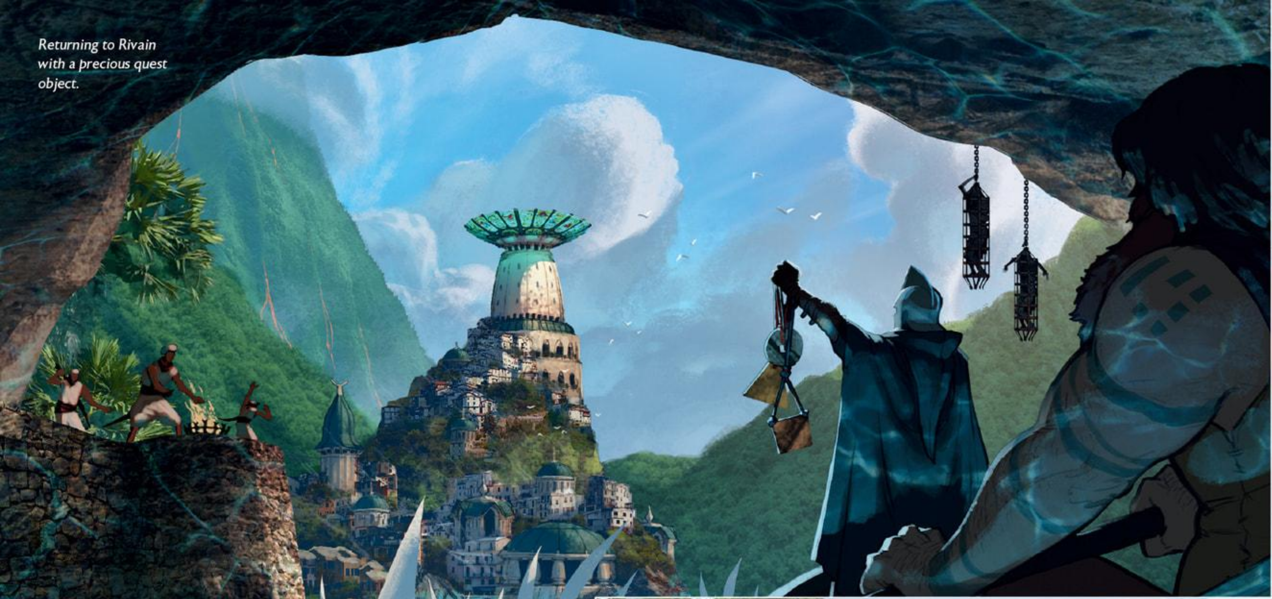
Matt Rhodes
Art Director

Life in the Tevinter Imperium.



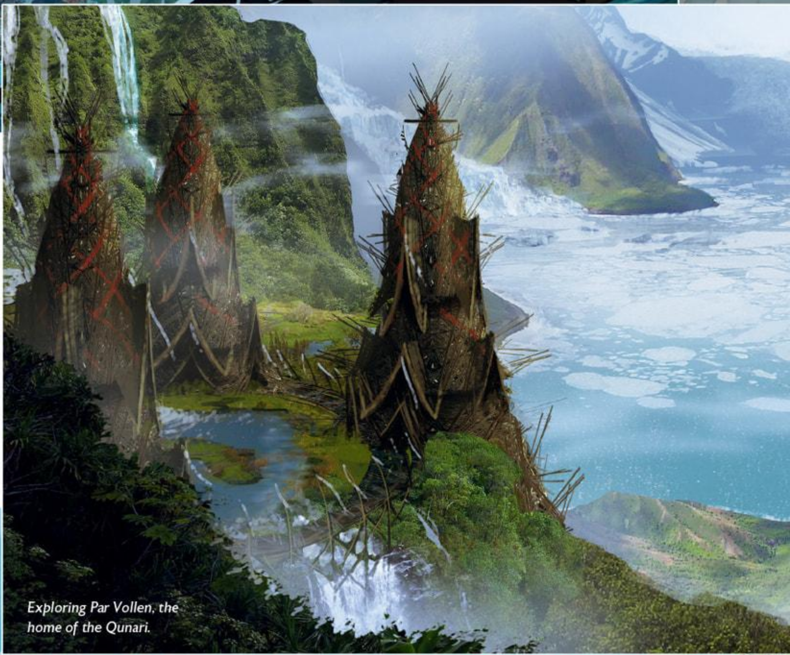
PART ONE

POST-INQUISITION

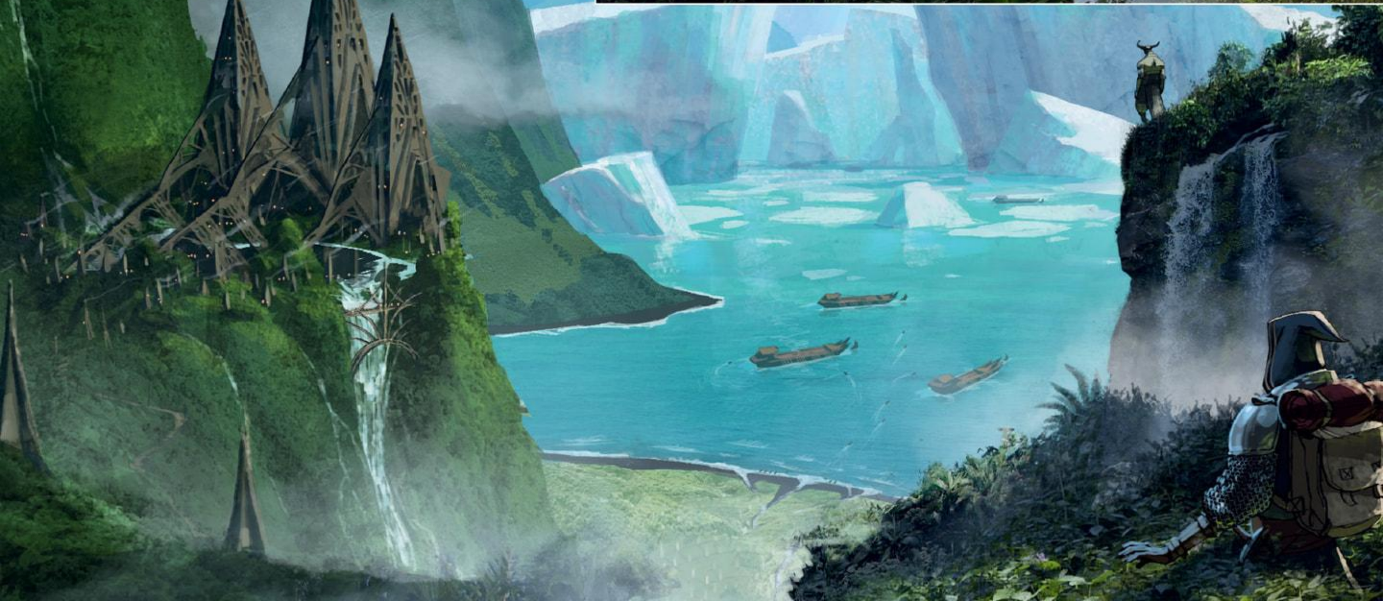


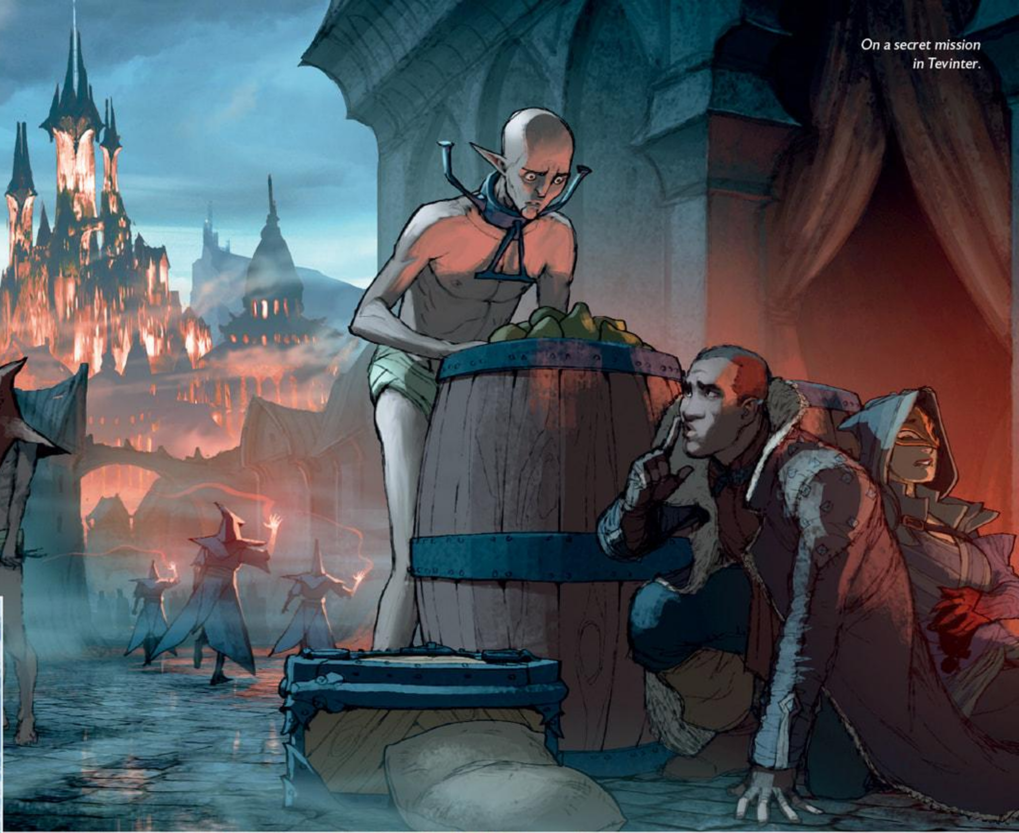
Returning to Rivain with a precious quest object.

Halfway through the development of *Dragon Age: Inquisition* we created a series of illustrations we called "beat boards" (intended to cover a major moment or "beat," they are more polished than a storyboard). They proved to be helpful as we brought the game together. As *Inquisition* was coming to a close, and a sliver of attention was being paid to the next game, we wanted to try doing beat boards right at the start of the game, rather than the middle. With a few general ideas like "We're going north" and "Maybe there are Titans" and a sense of story momentum, we started creating exploratory beat boards, asking ourselves the simple question: "What would be cool?"

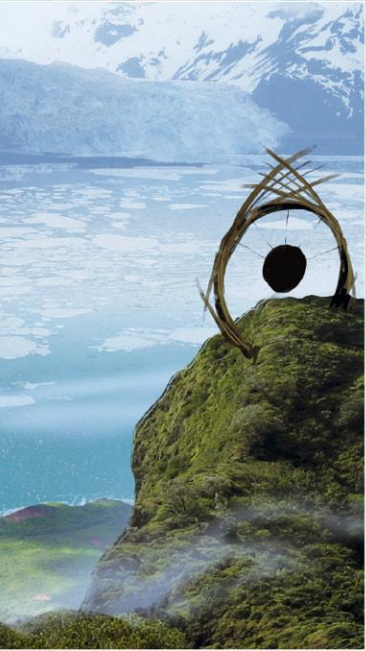


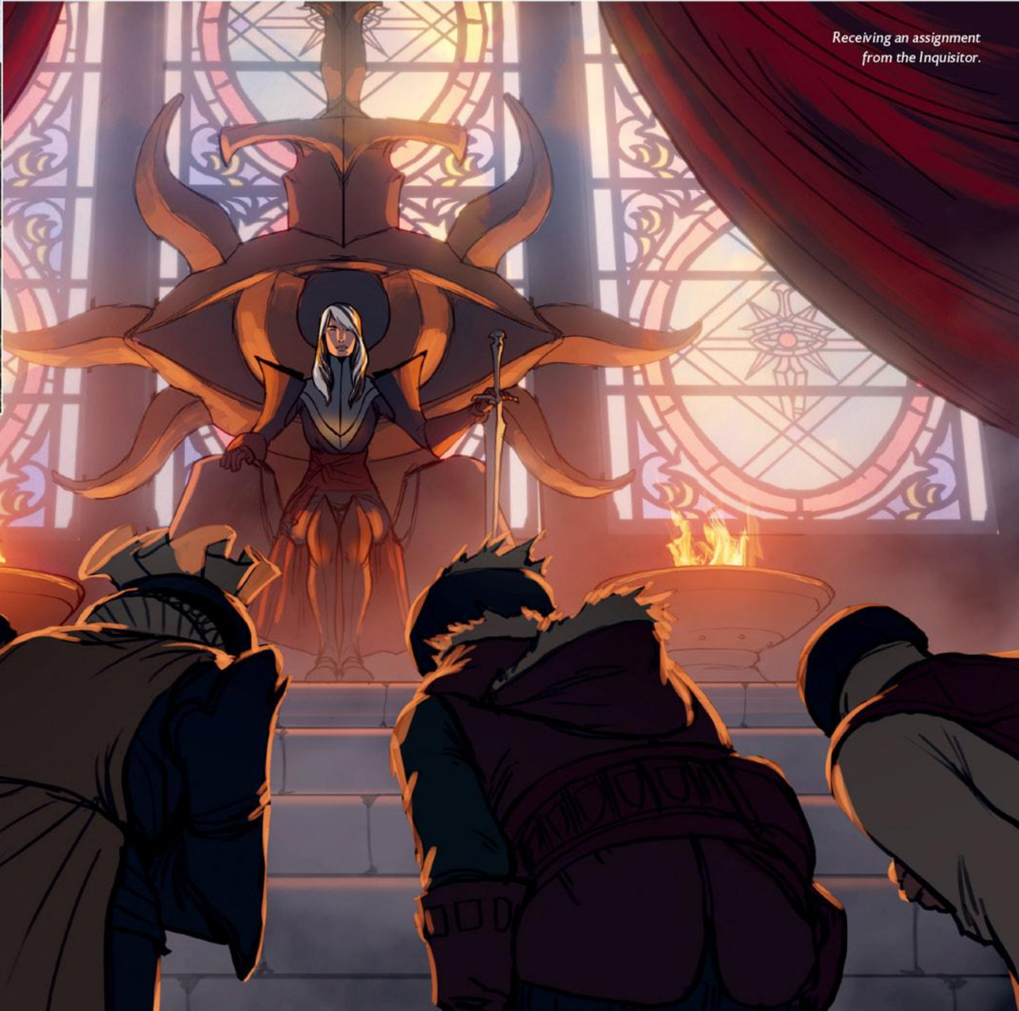
Exploring Par Vollen, the home of the Qunari.



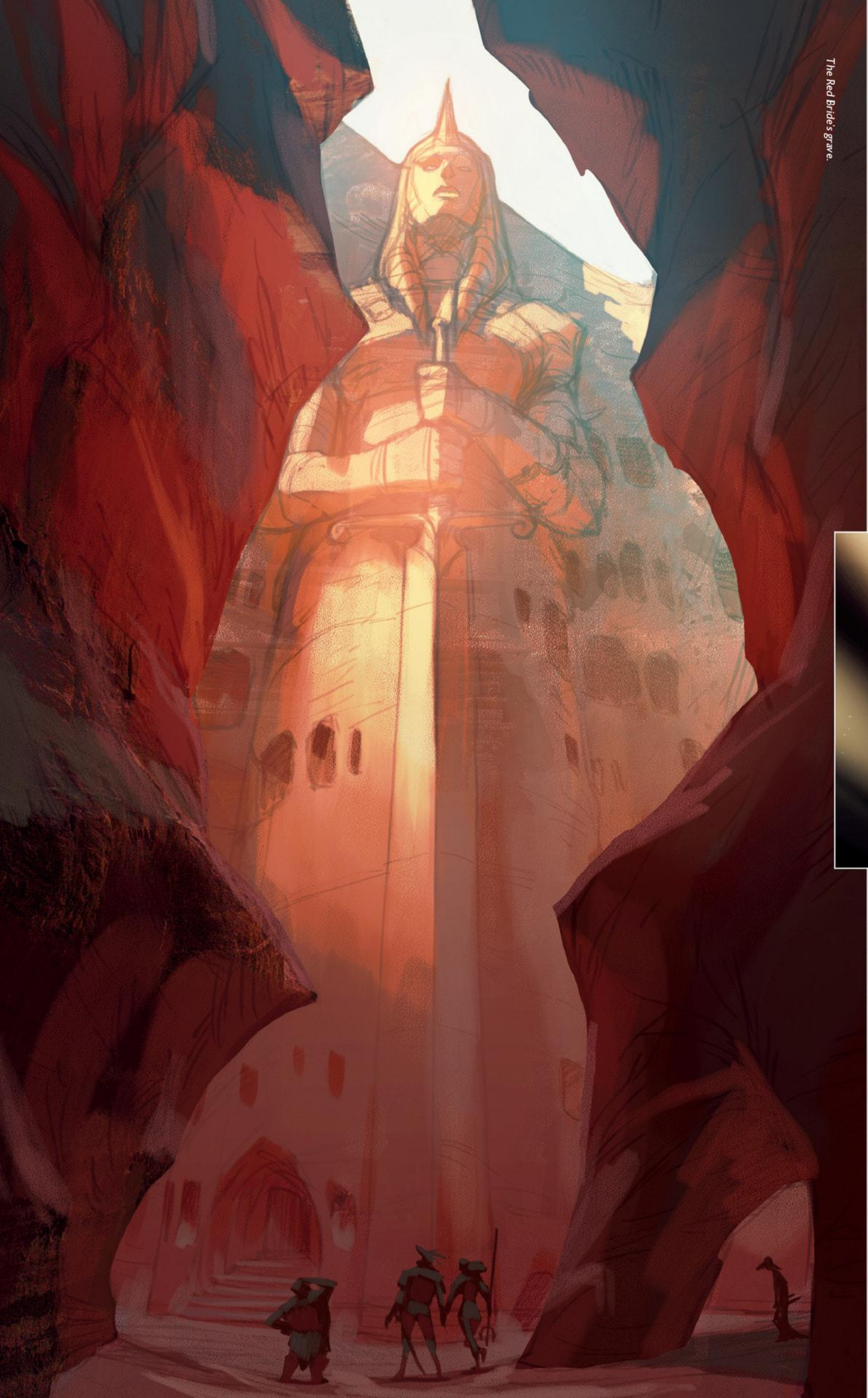


On a secret mission in Tevinter.

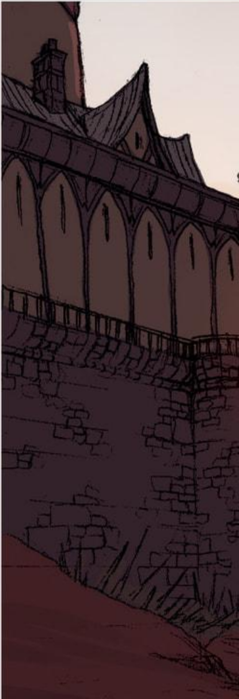


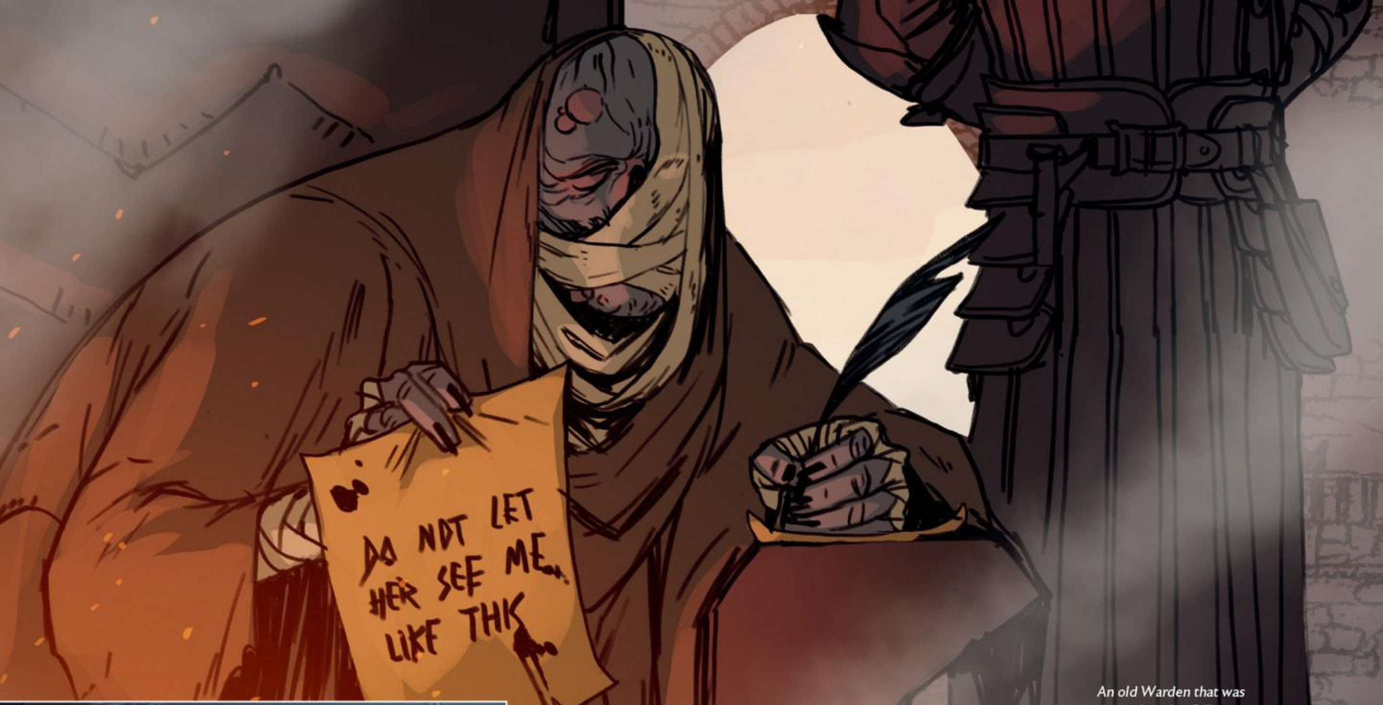


Receiving an assignment from the Inquisitor.

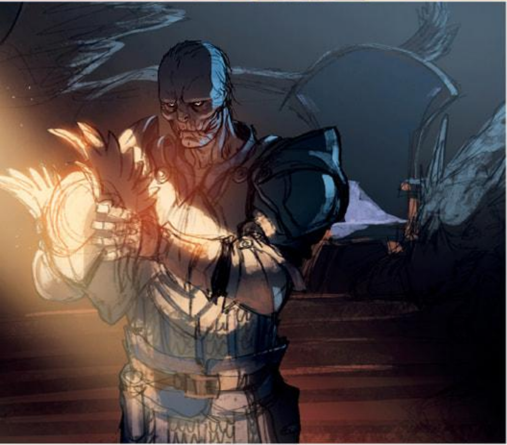


The Red Bride's grave.



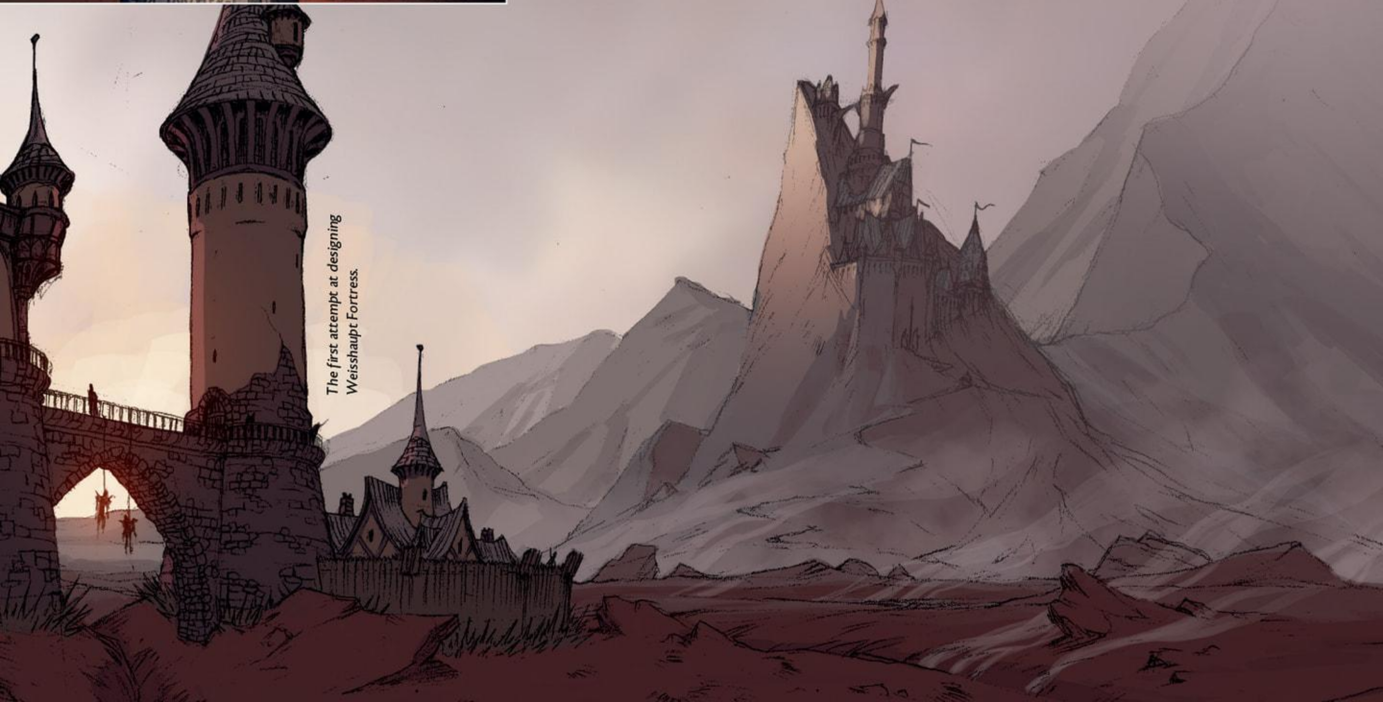


An old Warden that was avoiding the Calling.

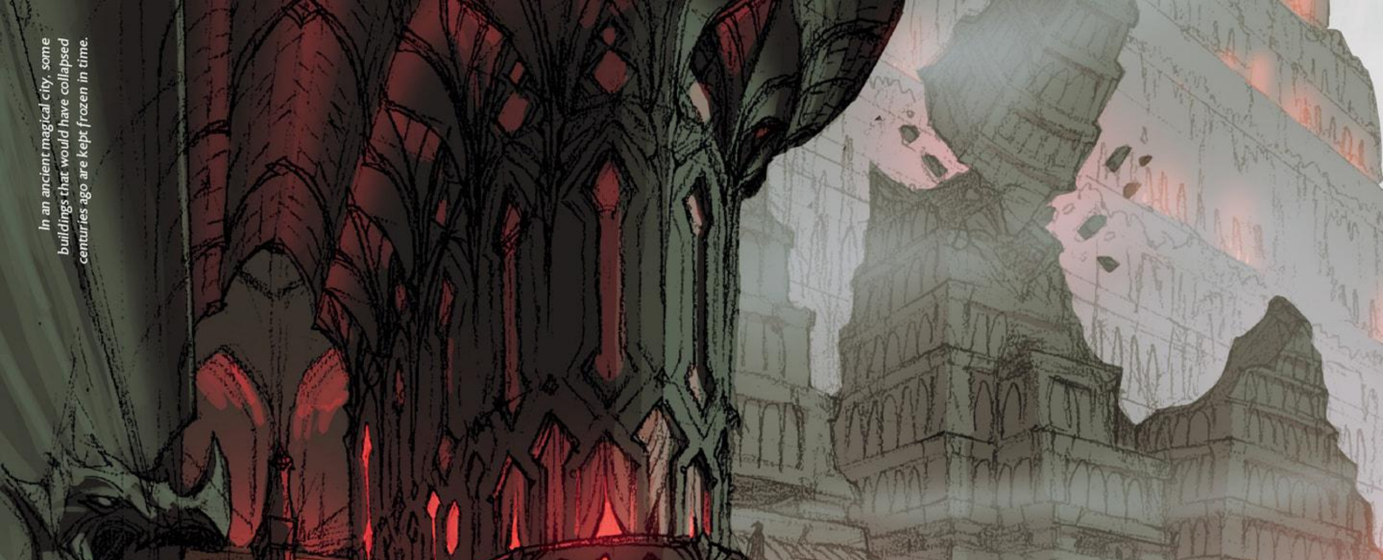


NORTHERN THEDAS

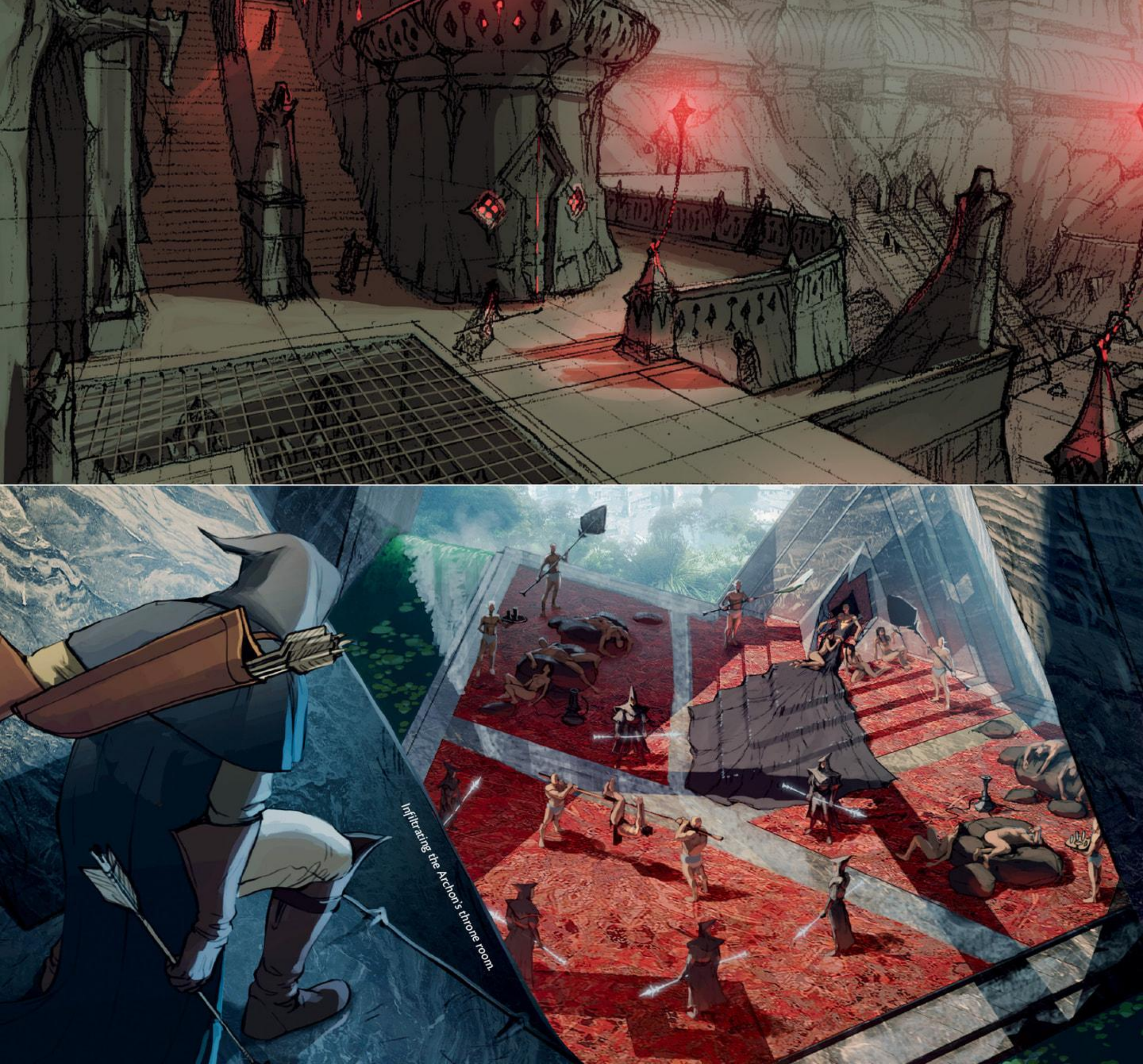
Designing the cultures of northern Thedas was like a fun speculative-archaeology project. We were starting with fragments. There were occasional props, characters, or journal entries that hinted at these cultures, and we had to reverse-engineer living, breathing societies from those fragments. The most important aspect was to design them in a way that respected our fans' engagement with the material but also attempted to exceed their imaginations (or at least do them justice).



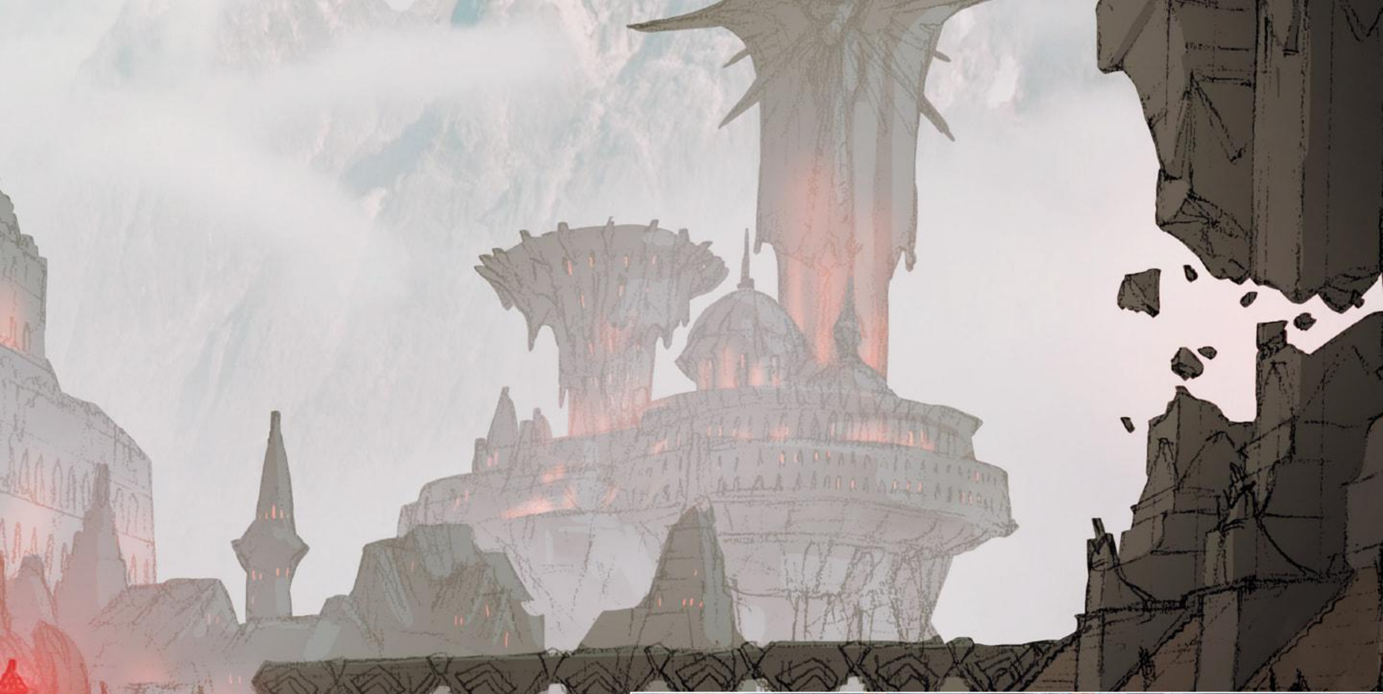
The first attempt at designing Weisshaupt Fortress.

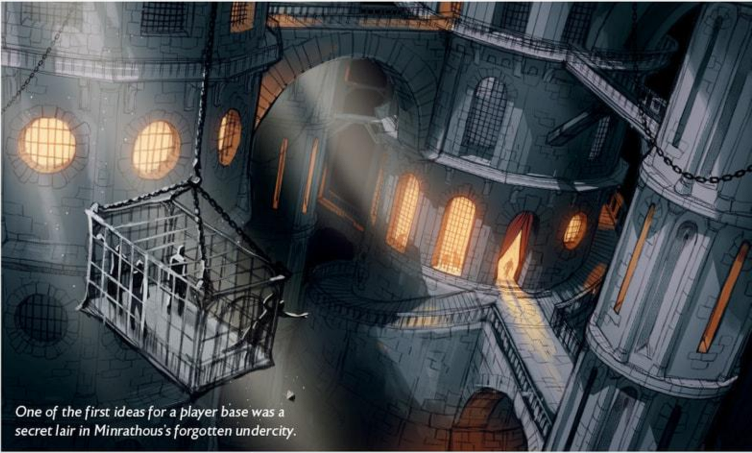


In an ancient magical city, some buildings that would have collapsed centuries ago are kept frozen in time.

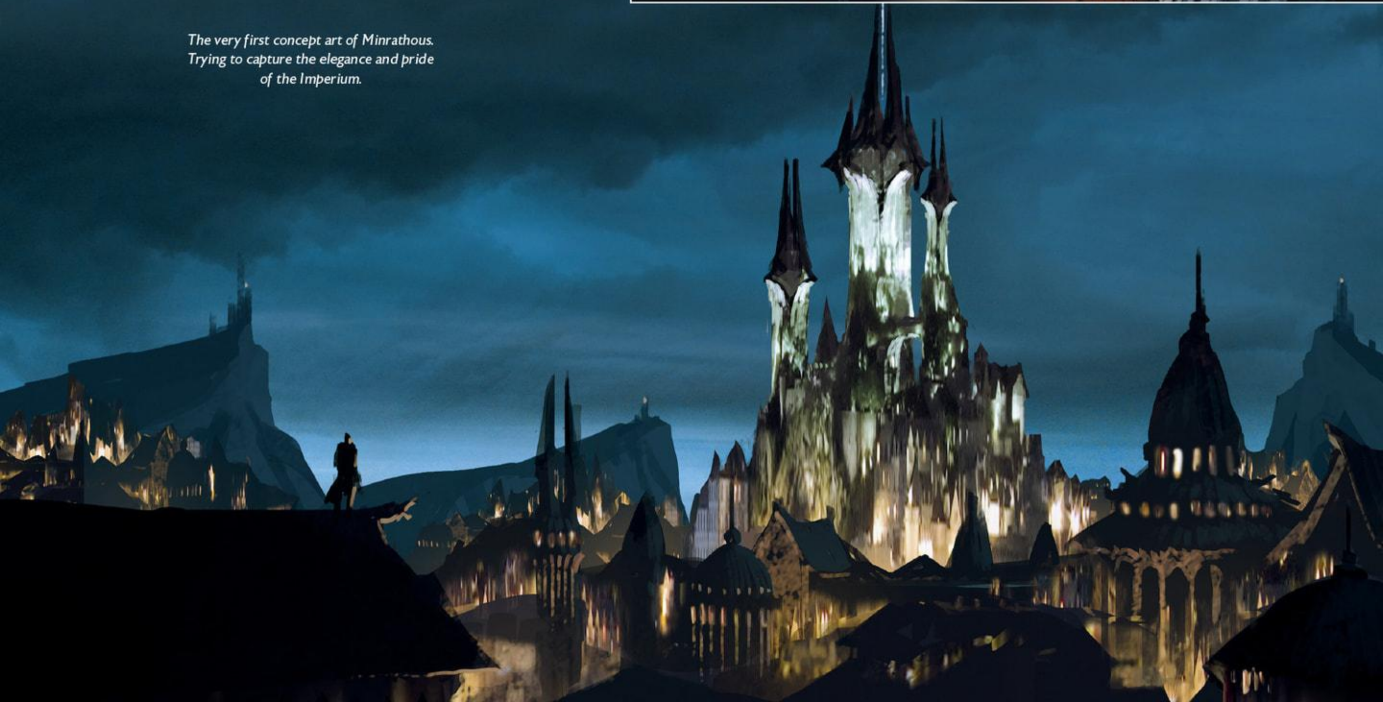


Infiltrating the Archon's throne room.

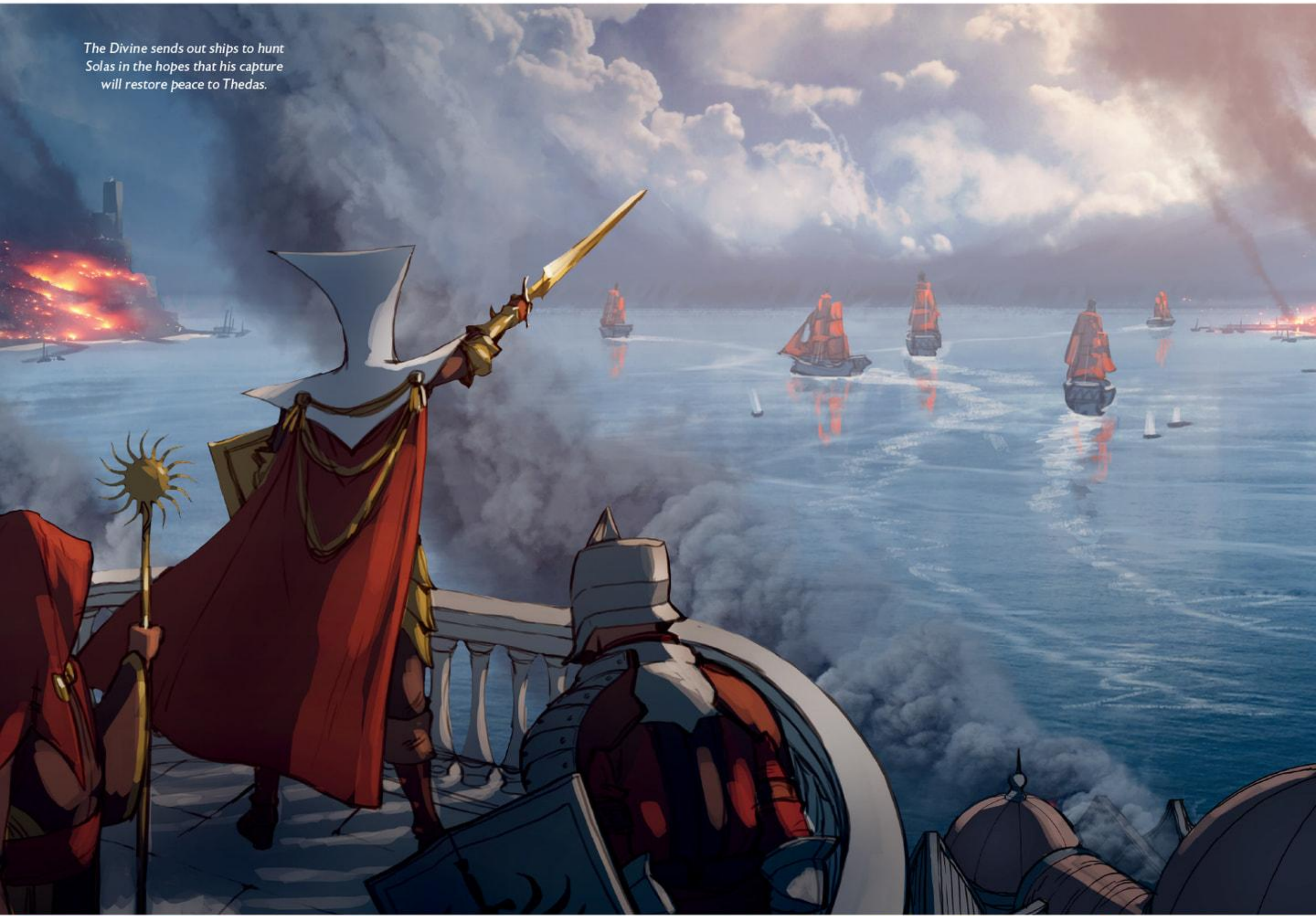




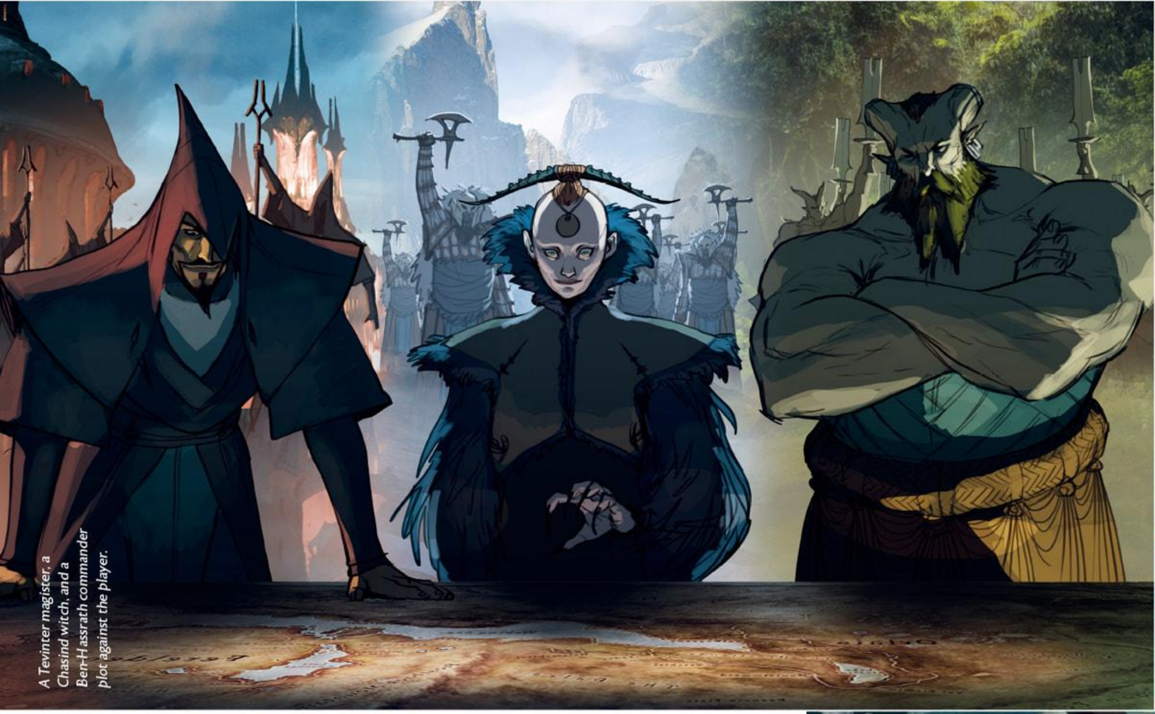
One of the first ideas for a player base was a secret lair in Minrathous's forgotten undercity.



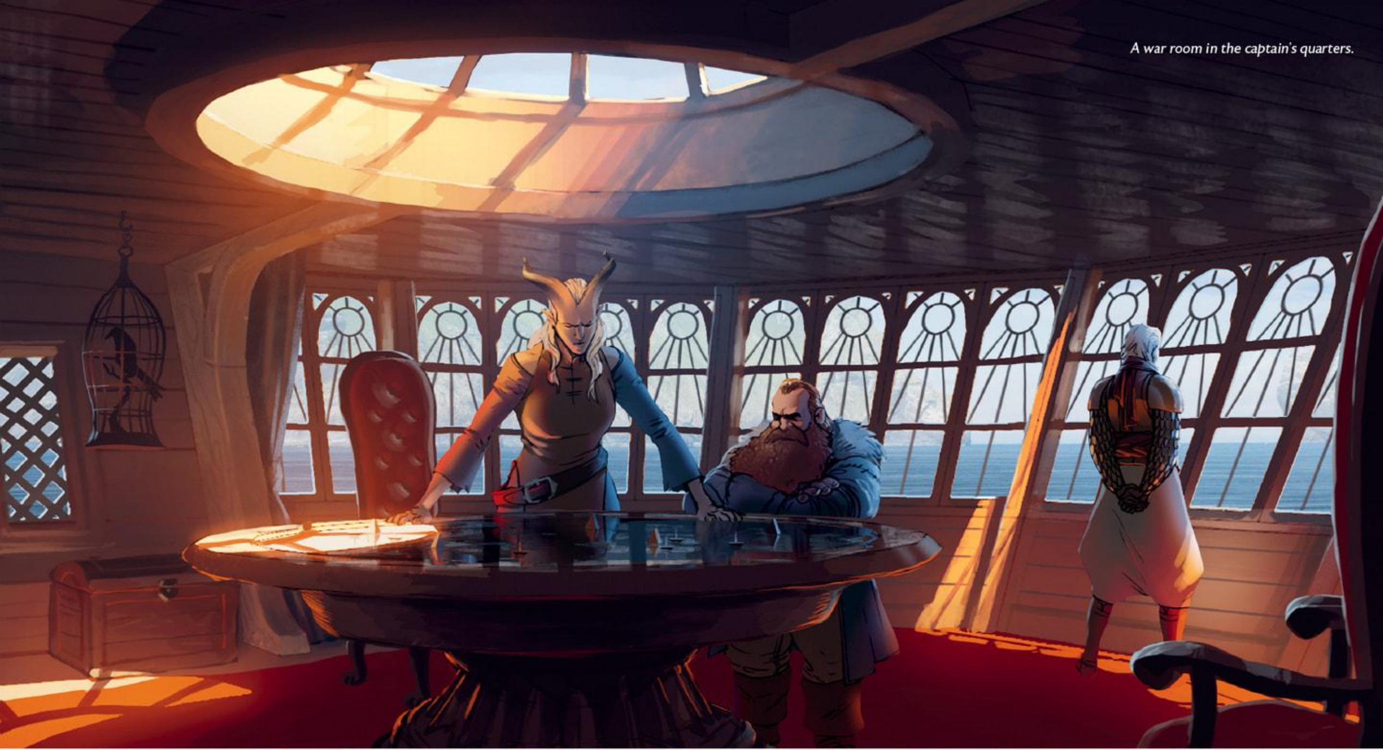
The very first concept art of Minrathous. Trying to capture the elegance and pride of the Imperium.



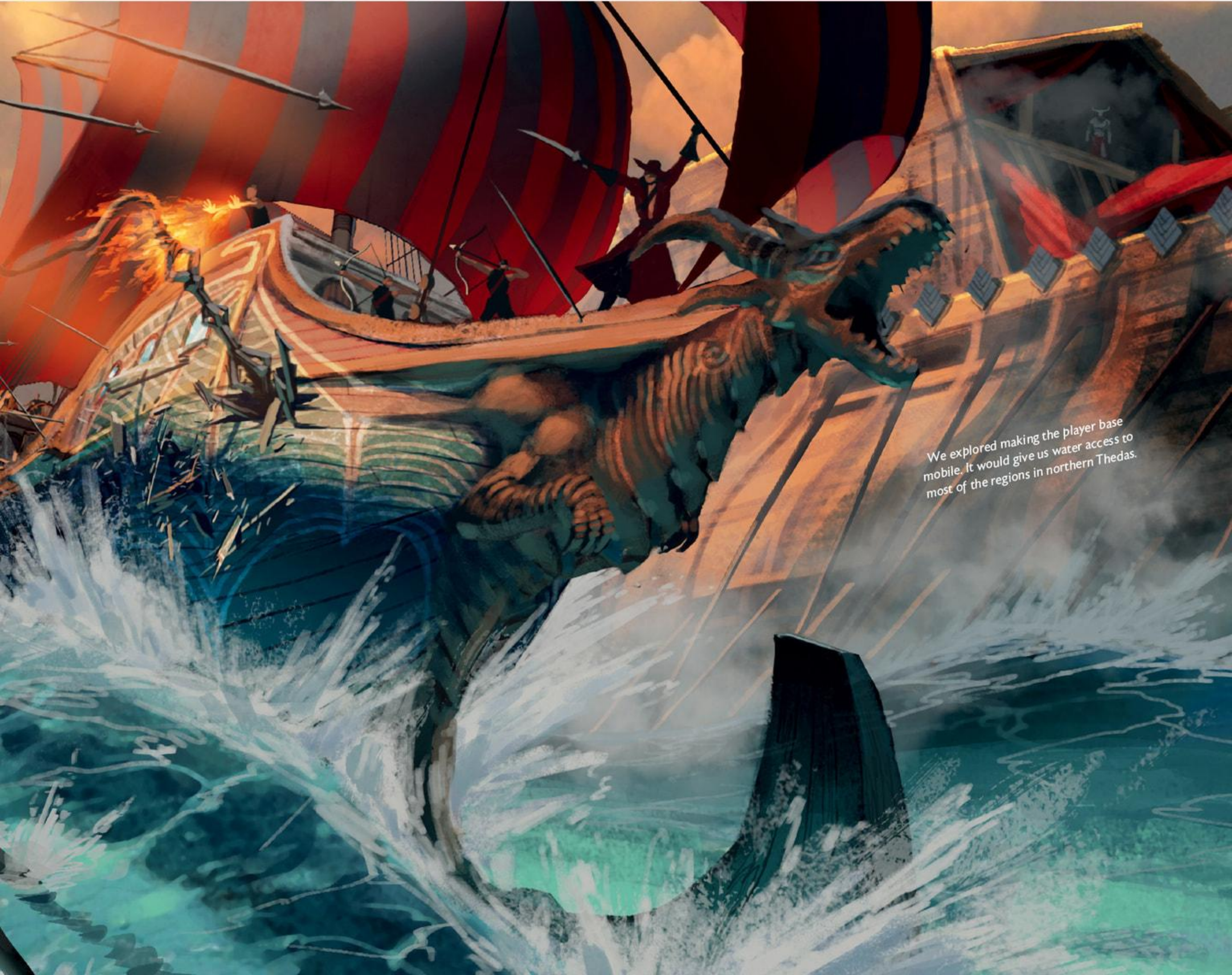
The Divine sends out ships to hunt Solas in the hopes that his capture will restore peace to Thedas.



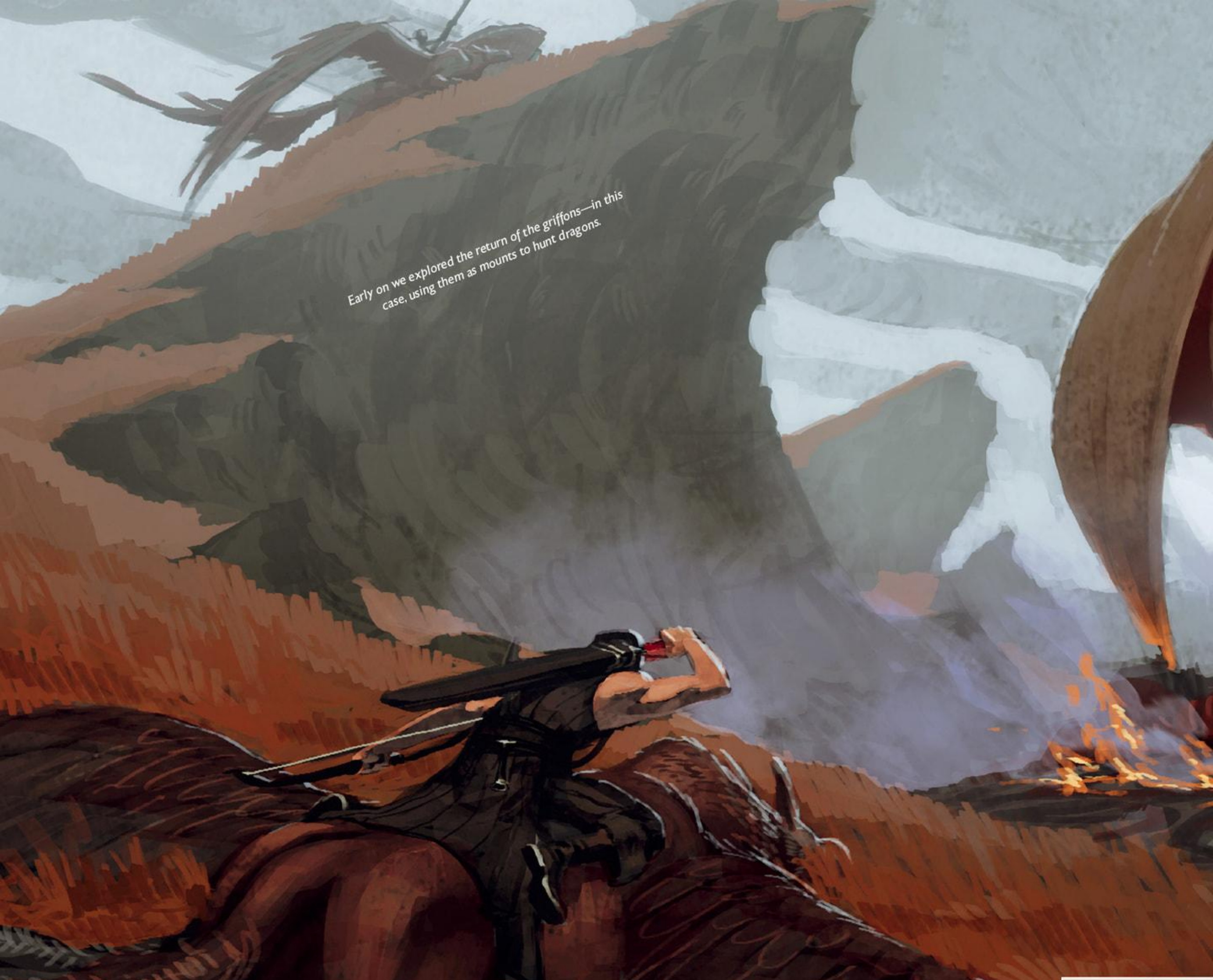
A Tevinter magister, a Chasind witch, and a Ben-Hassrath commander plot against the player.



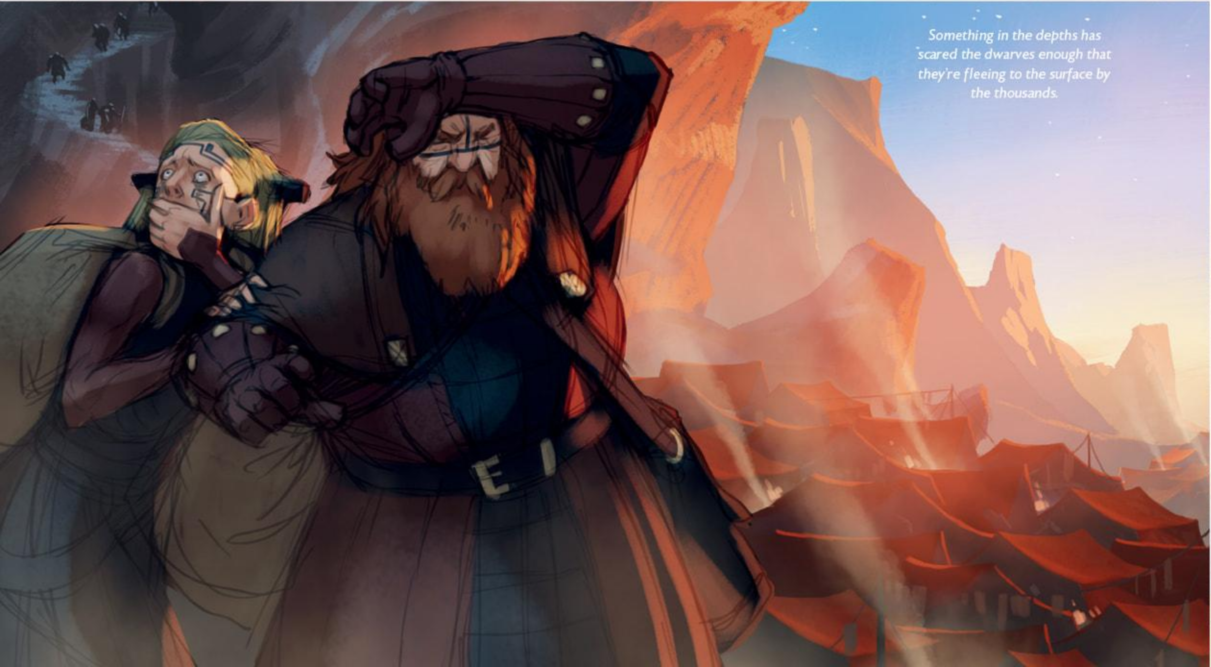
A war room in the captain's quarters.



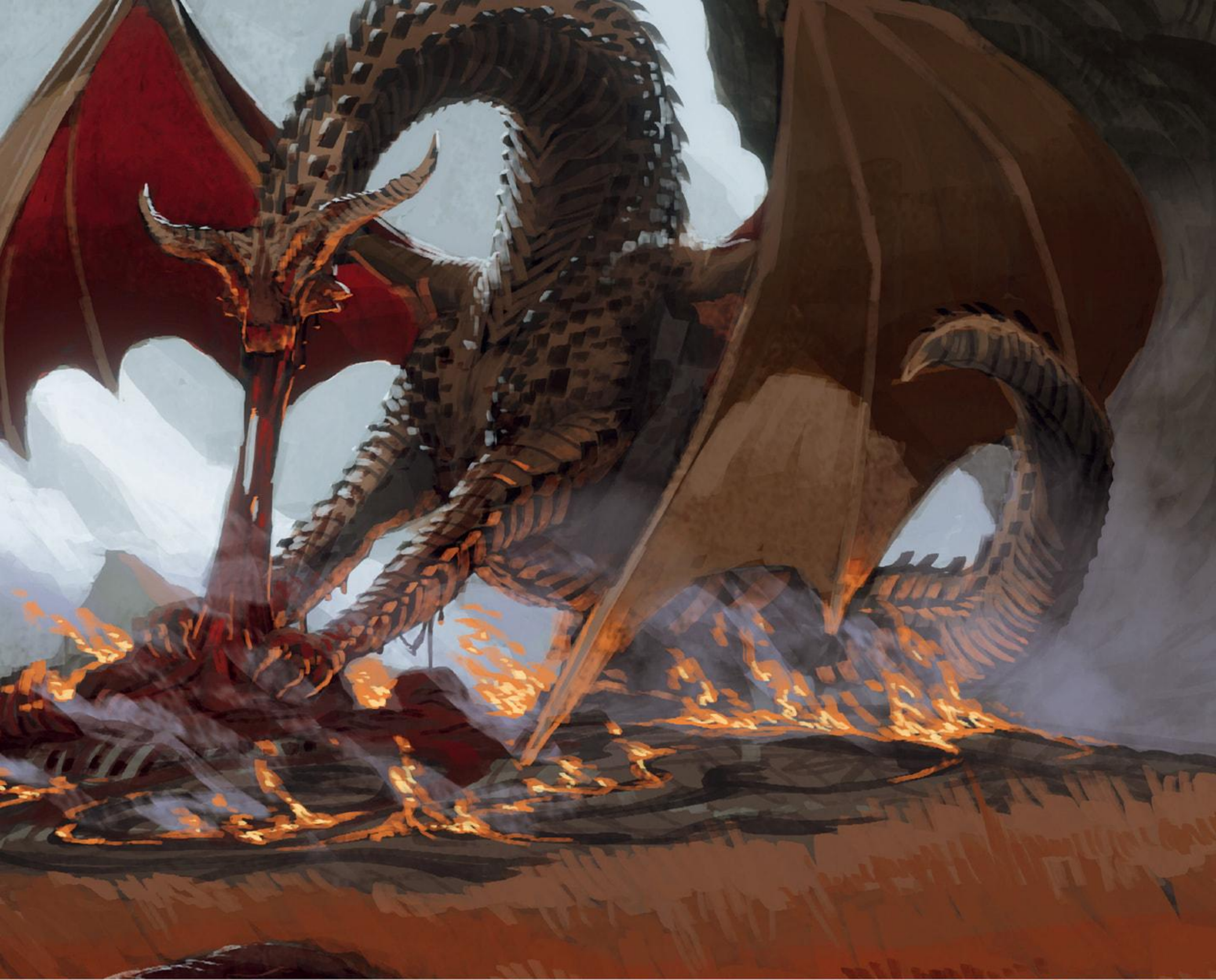
We explored making the player base mobile. It would give us water access to most of the regions in northern Thedas.

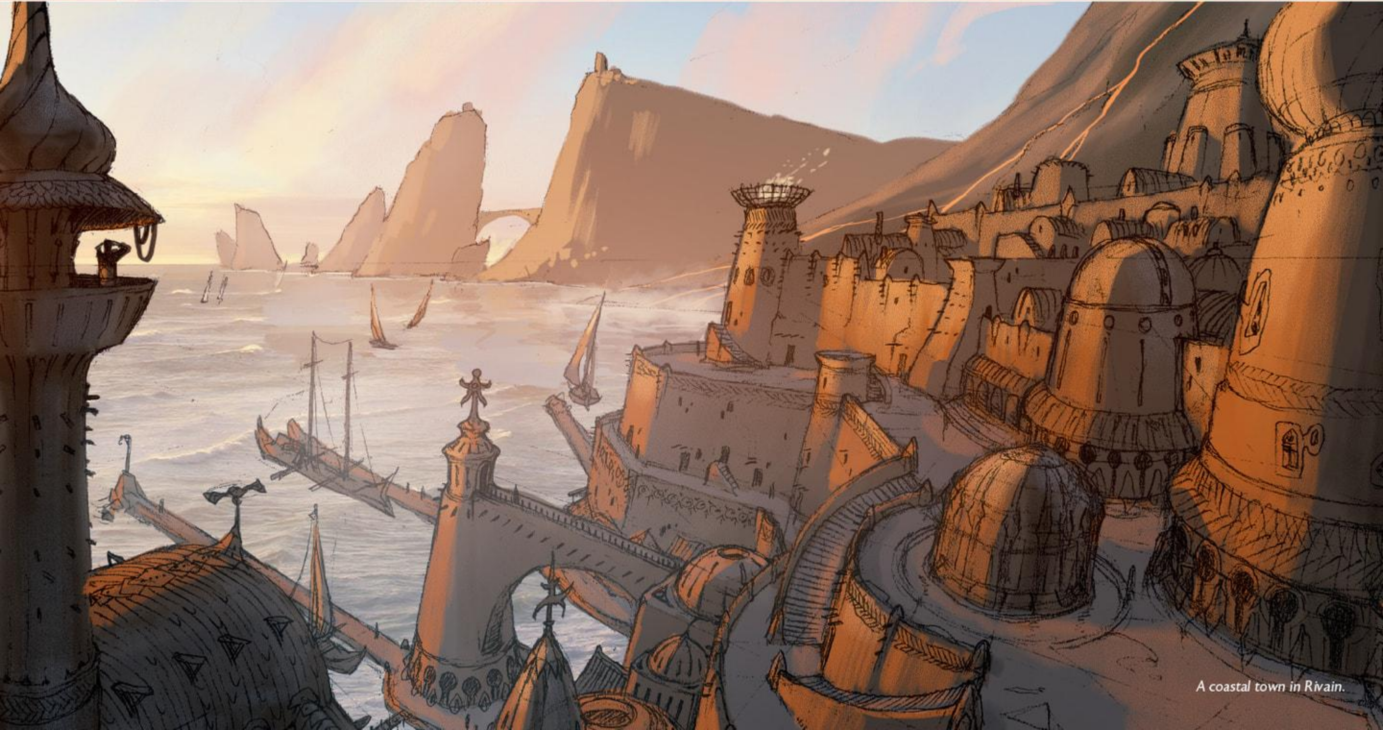


Early on we explored the return of the griffons—in this case, using them as mounts to hunt dragons.

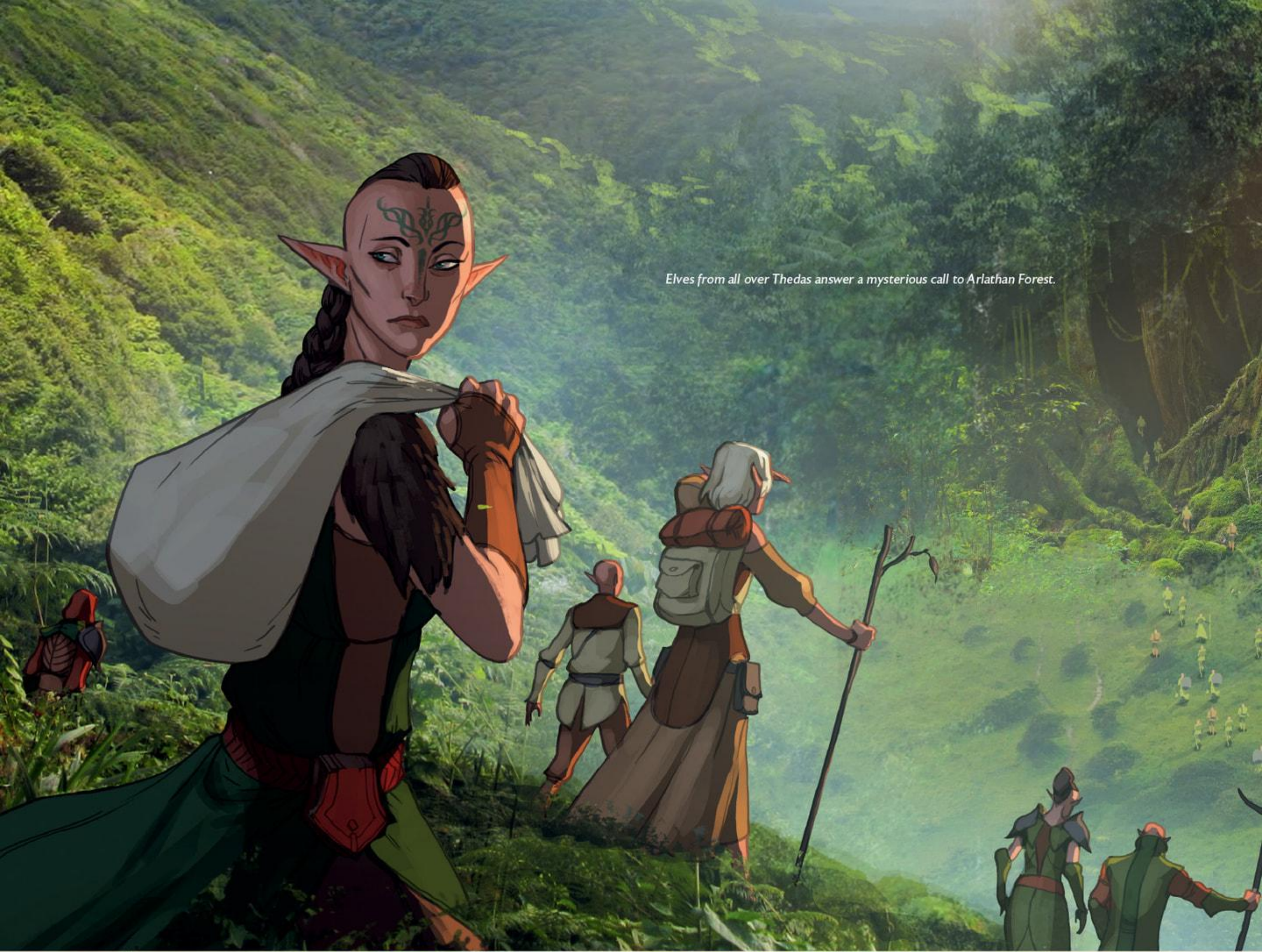


Something in the depths has scared the dwarves enough that they're fleeing to the surface by the thousands.

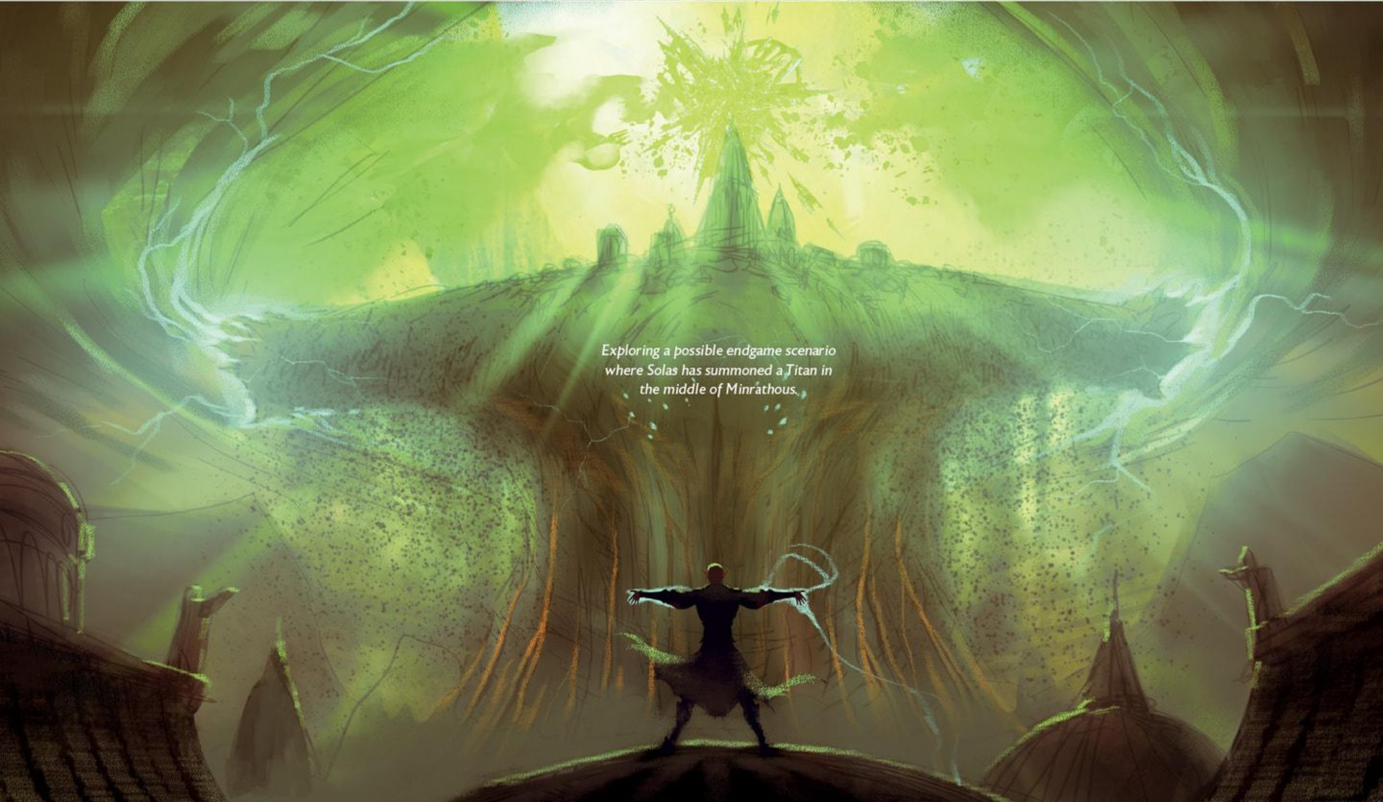




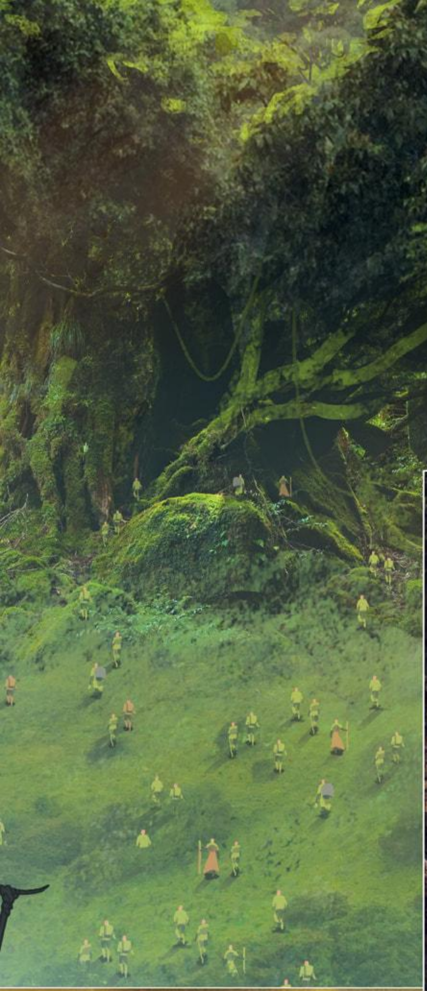
A coastal town in Rivain.

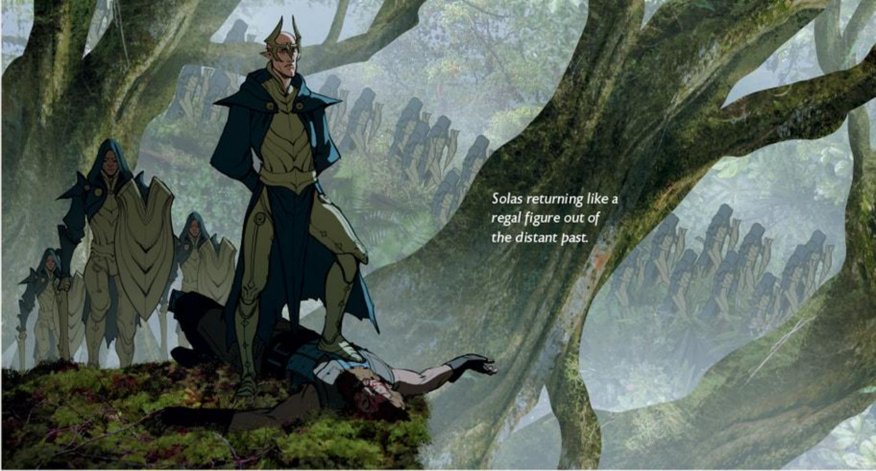


Elves from all over Thedas answer a mysterious call to Arlathan Forest.

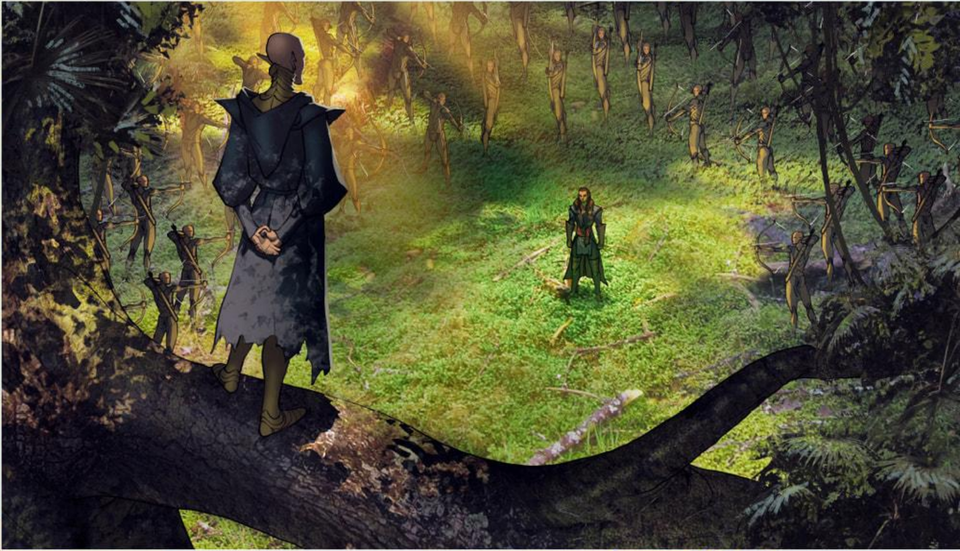


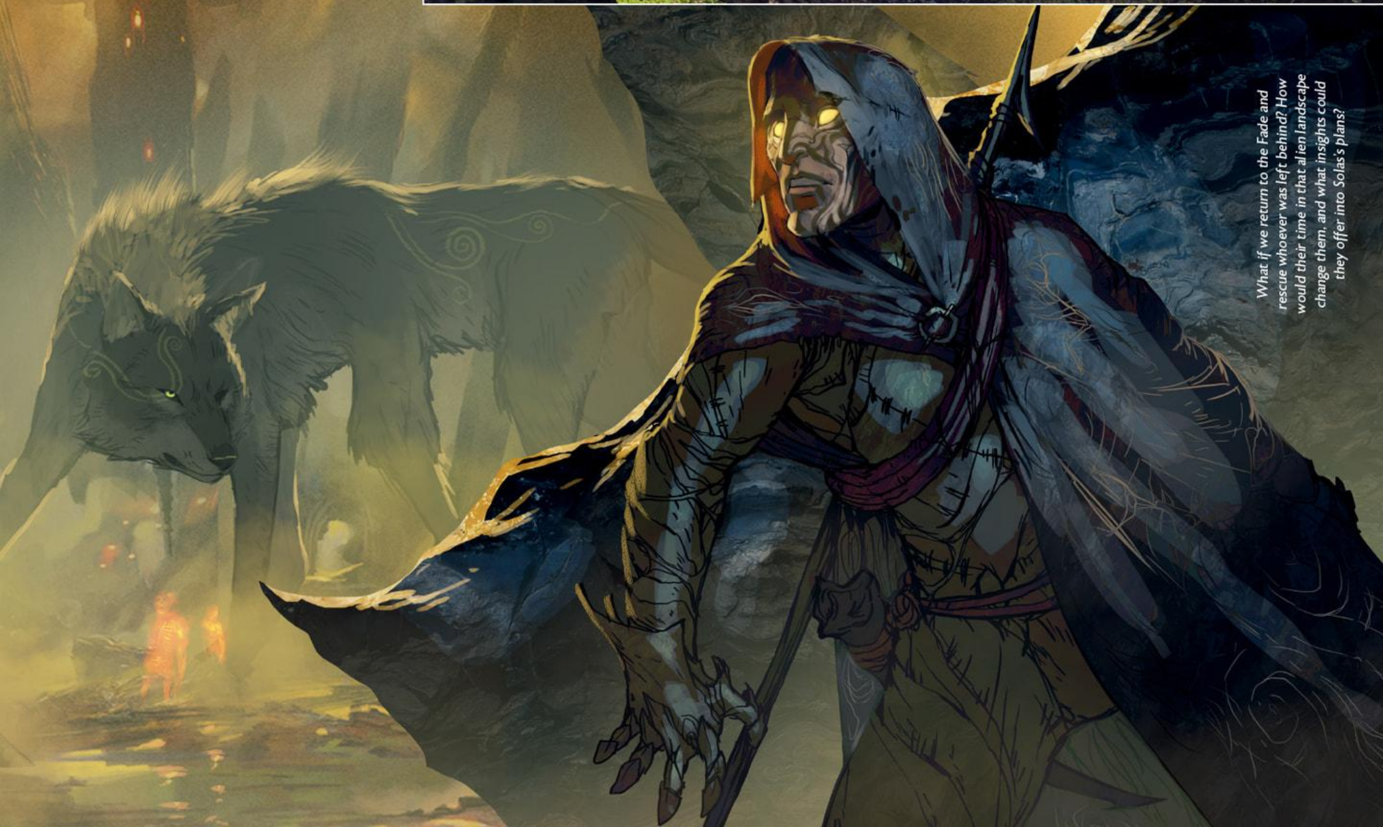
Exploring a possible endgame scenario where Solas has summoned a Titan in the middle of Minrathous.



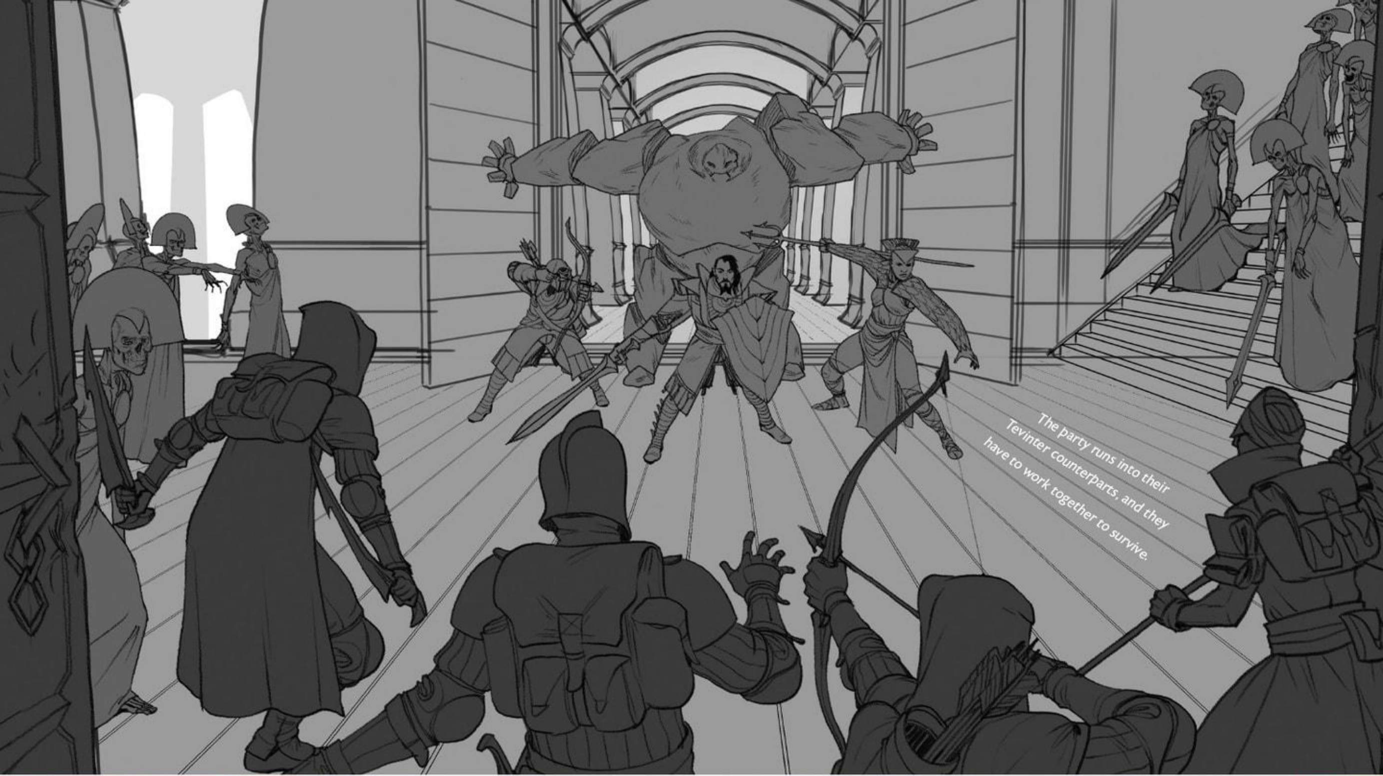


Solas returning like a regal figure out of the distant past.

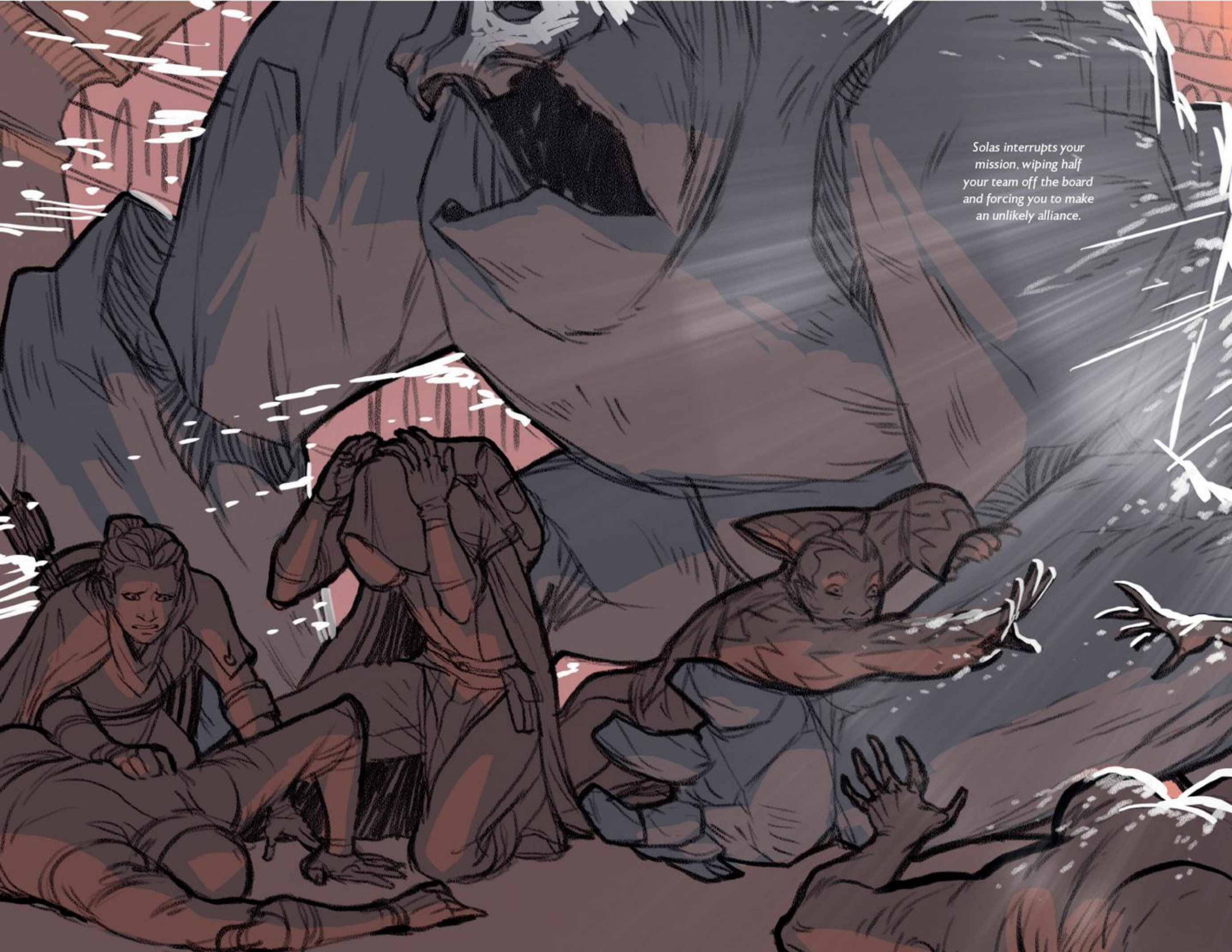




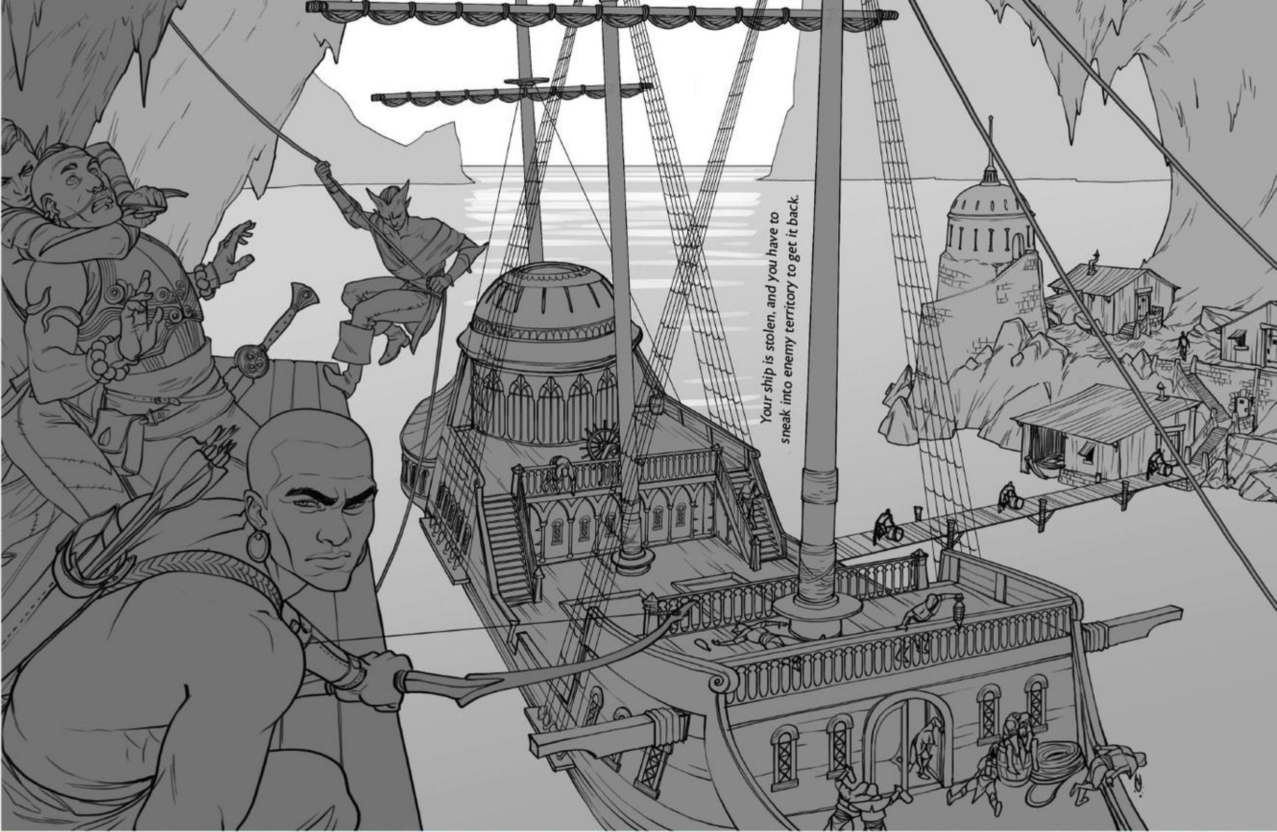
What if we return to the Fade and rescue whoever was left behind? How would their time in that alien landscape change them, and what insights could they offer into Solas's plans?



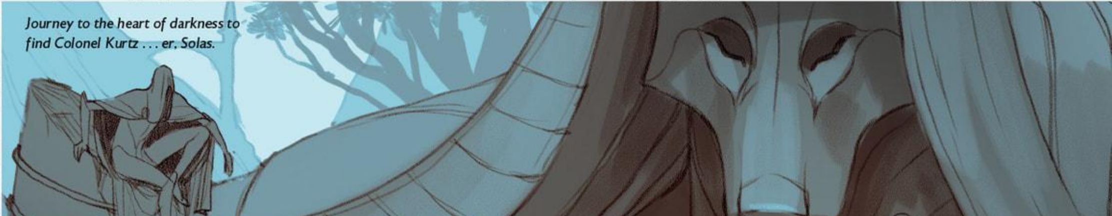
The party runs into their Tevinter counterparts, and they have to work together to survive.



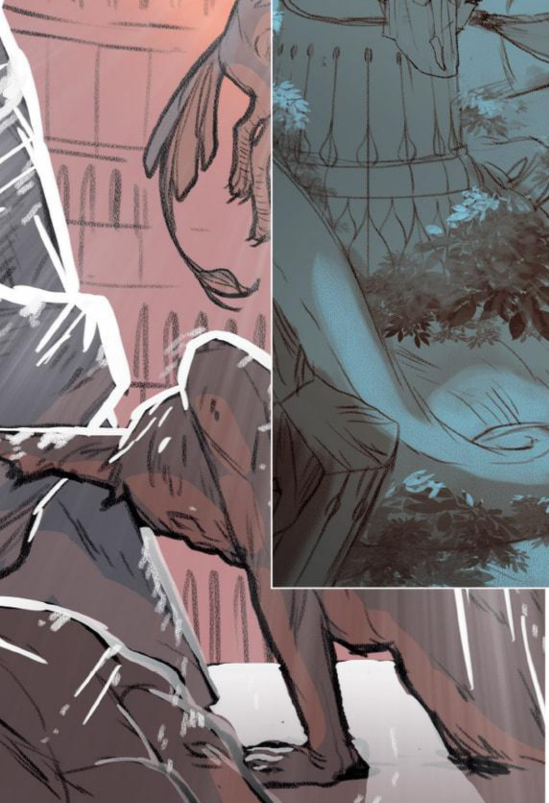
Solas interrupts your mission, wiping half your team off the board and forcing you to make an unlikely alliance.



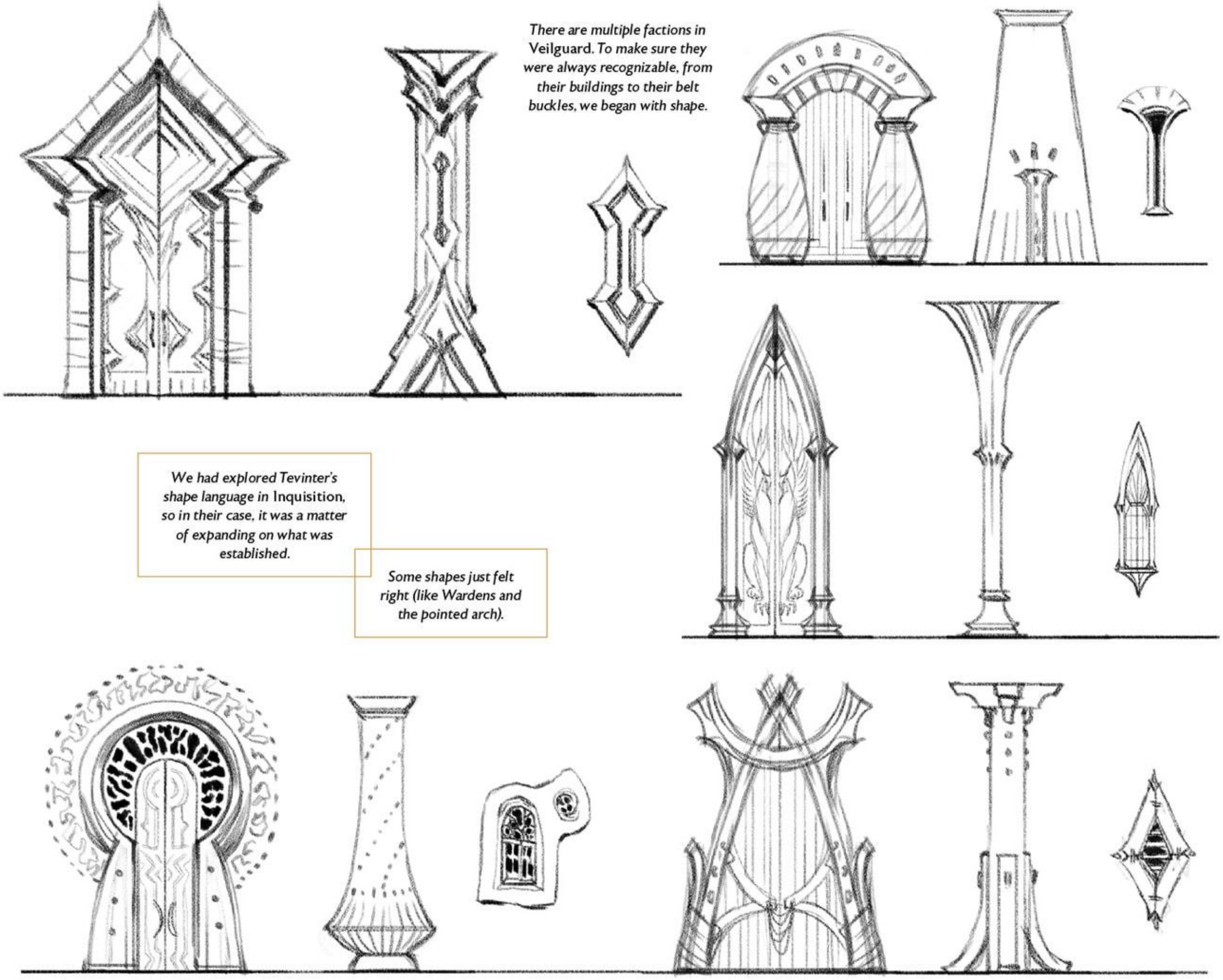
Your ship is stolen, and you have to sneak into enemy territory to get it back.



Journey to the heart of darkness to find Colonel Kurtz . . . er, Solas.



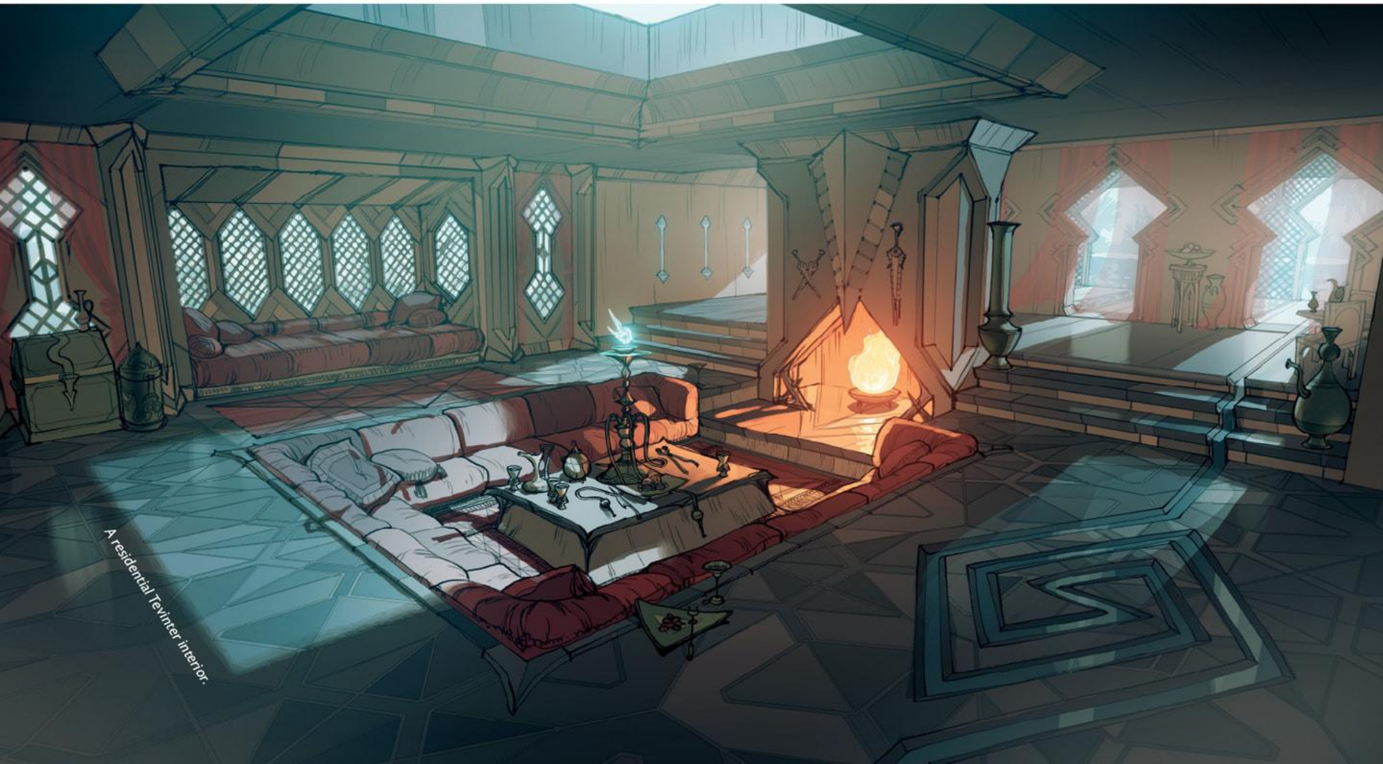
We created piles of sketches and line work to explore story beats. We could iterate quickly and throw things away if necessary.



There are multiple factions in Veilguard. To make sure they were always recognizable, from their buildings to their belt buckles, we began with shape.

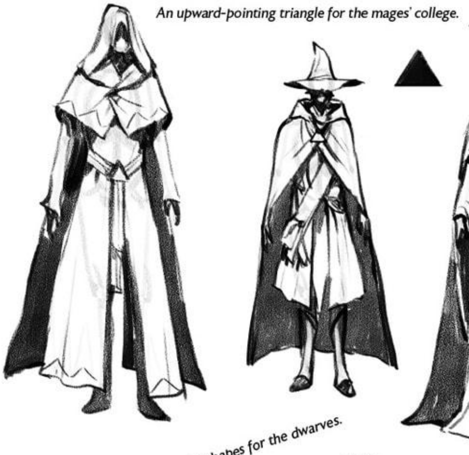
We had explored Tevinter's shape language in Inquisition, *so in their case, it was a matter of expanding on what was established.*

Some shapes just felt right (like Wardens and the pointed arch).

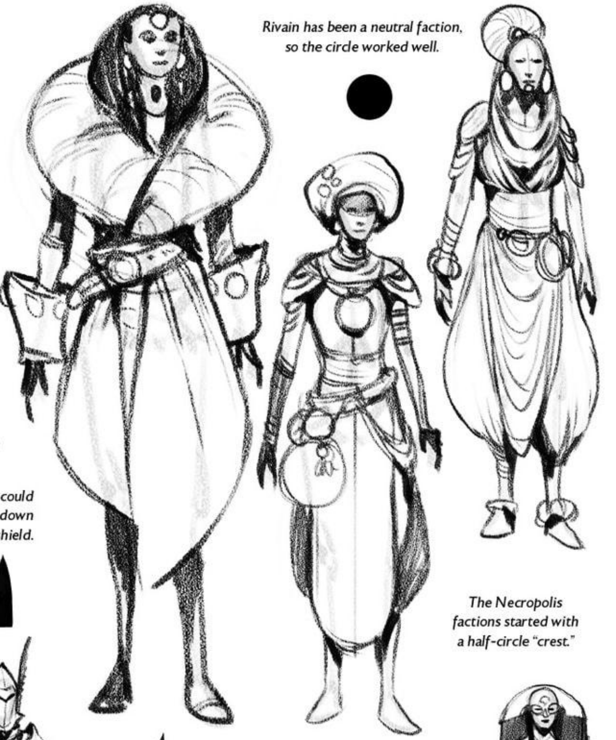


A residential Tevinter interior.

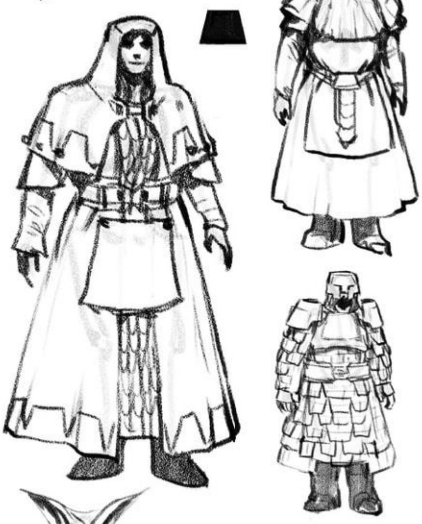
An upward-pointing triangle for the mages' college.



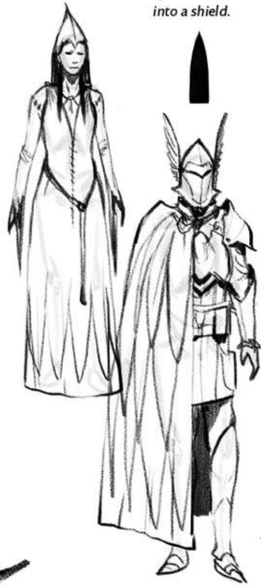
Rivain has been a neutral faction, so the circle worked well.

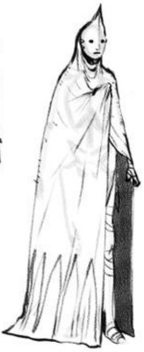


We explored some sturdy shapes for the dwarves.

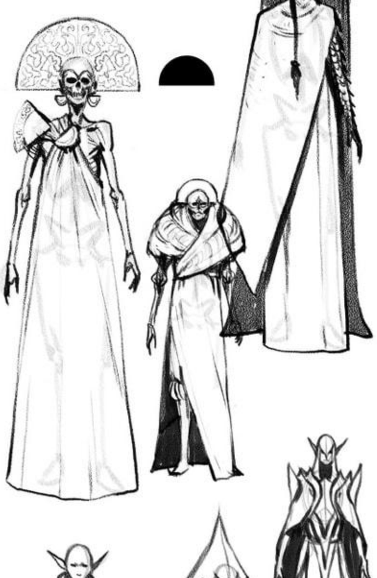


The Wardens' pointed arch could be turned upside down into a shield.

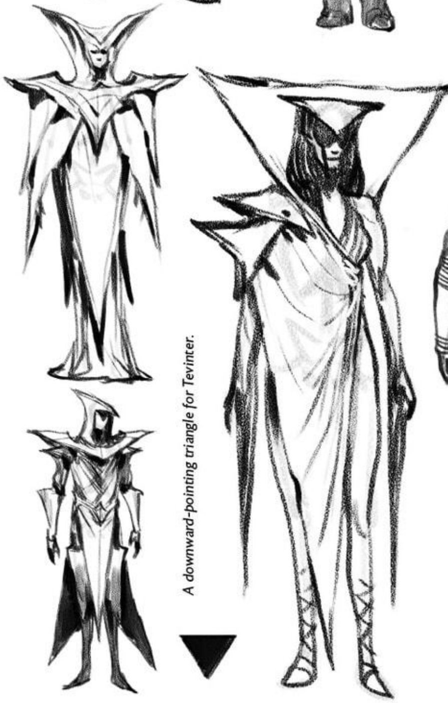




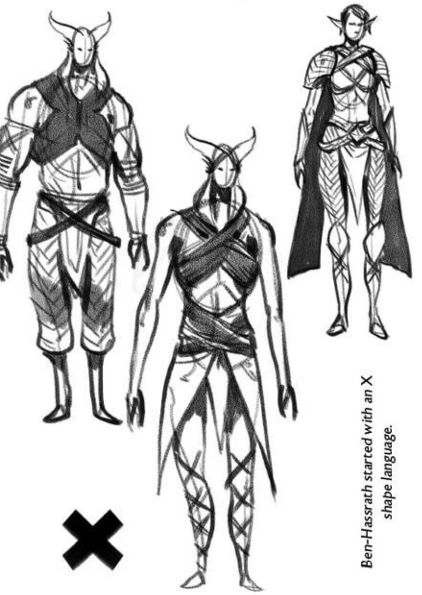
The Necropolis factions started with a half-circle "crest."

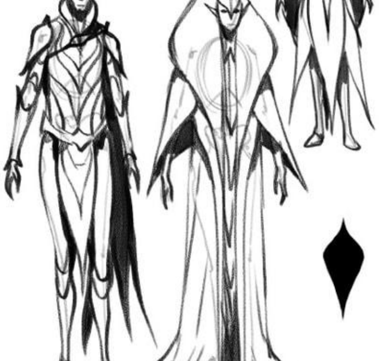


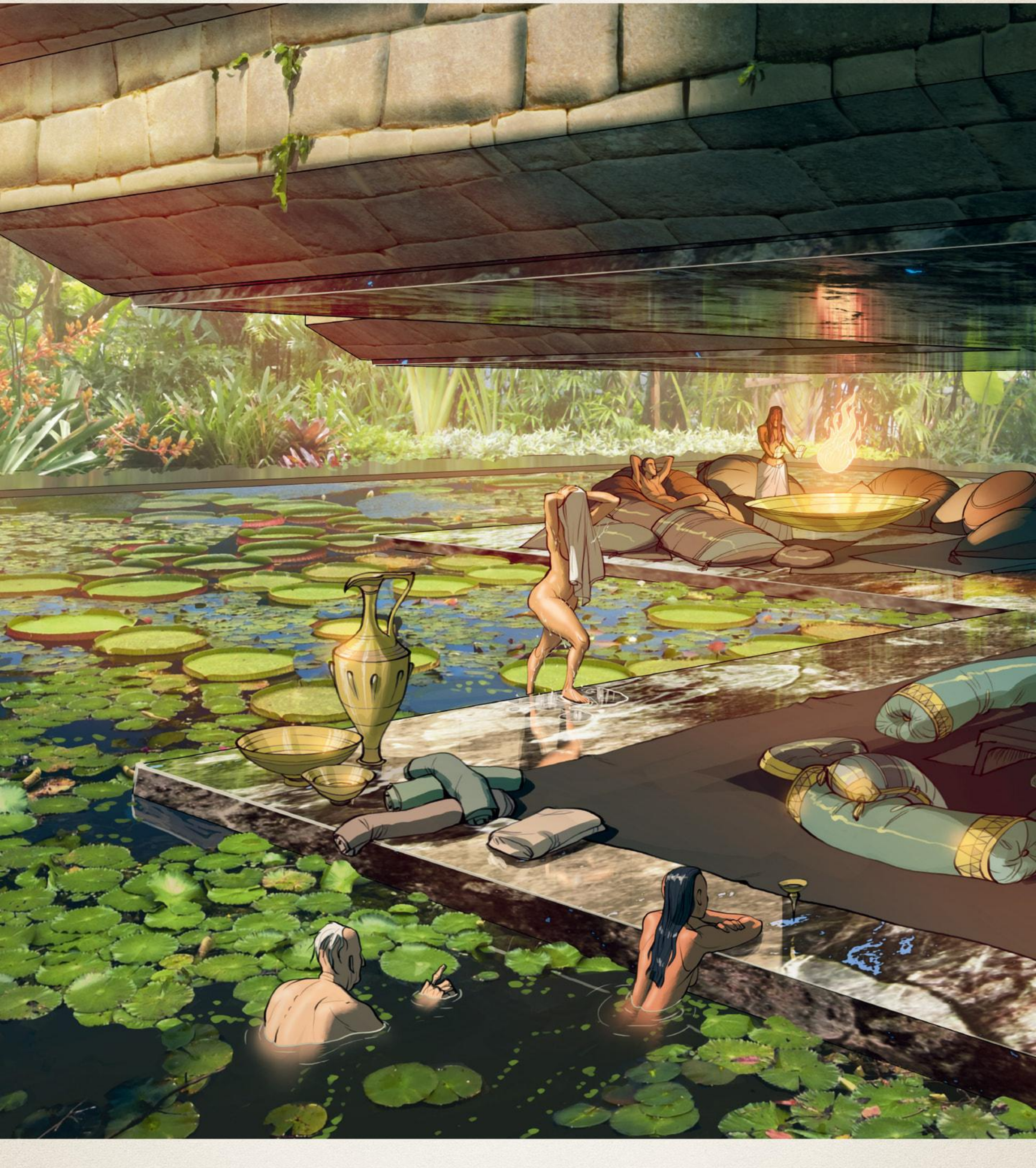
A downward-pointing triangle for Tevinter.

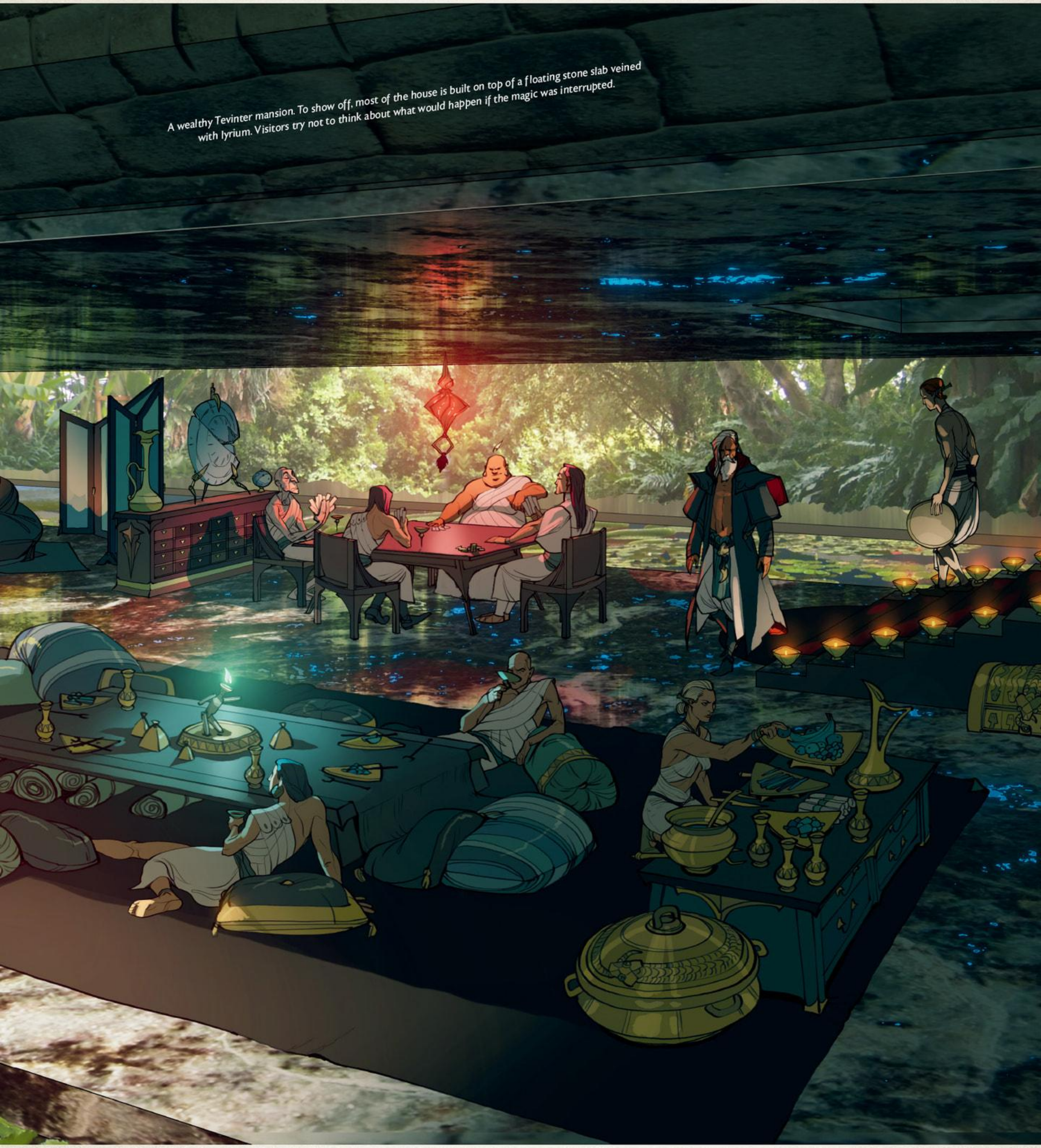


Ben-Hassrath started with an X shape language.

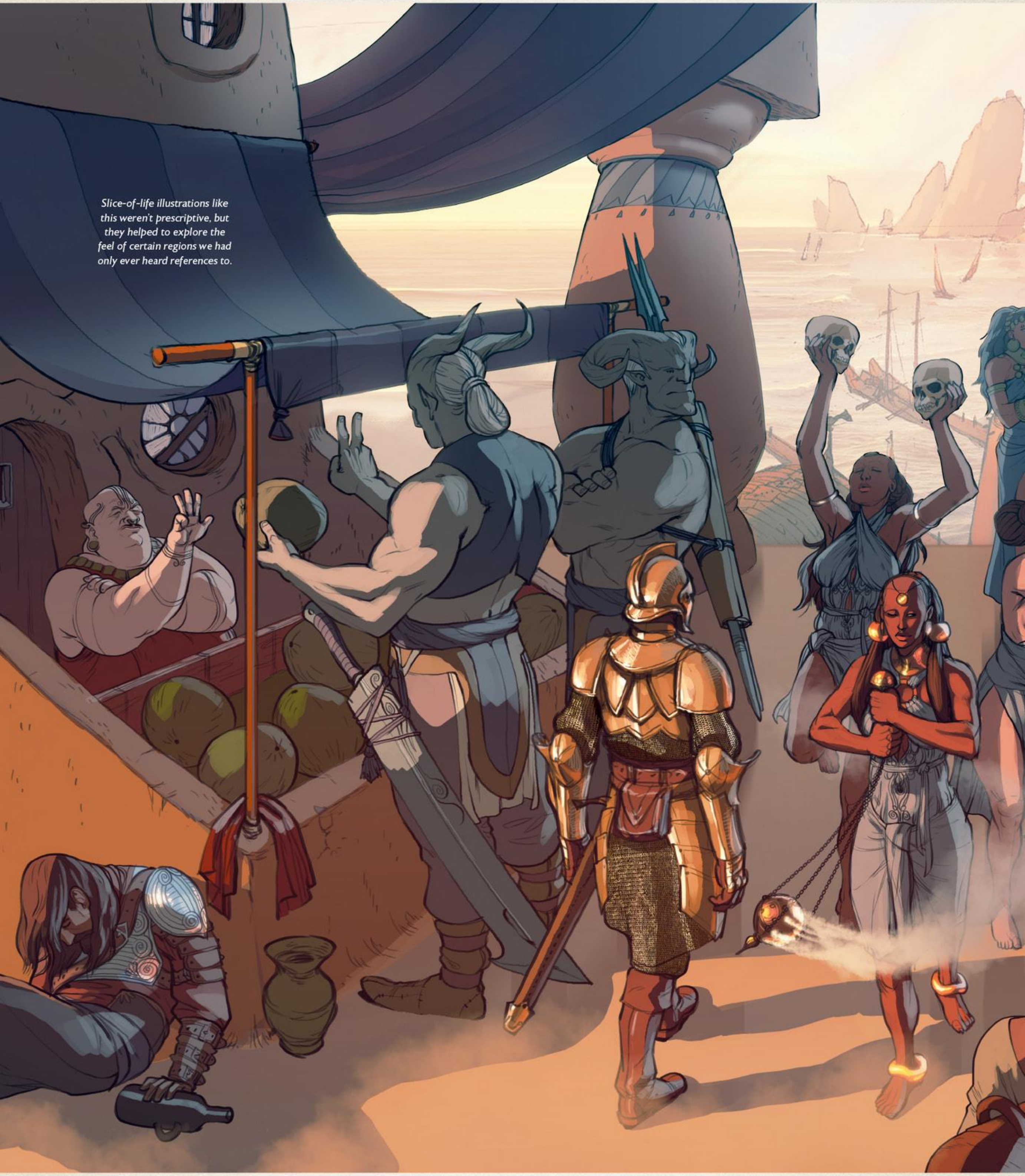




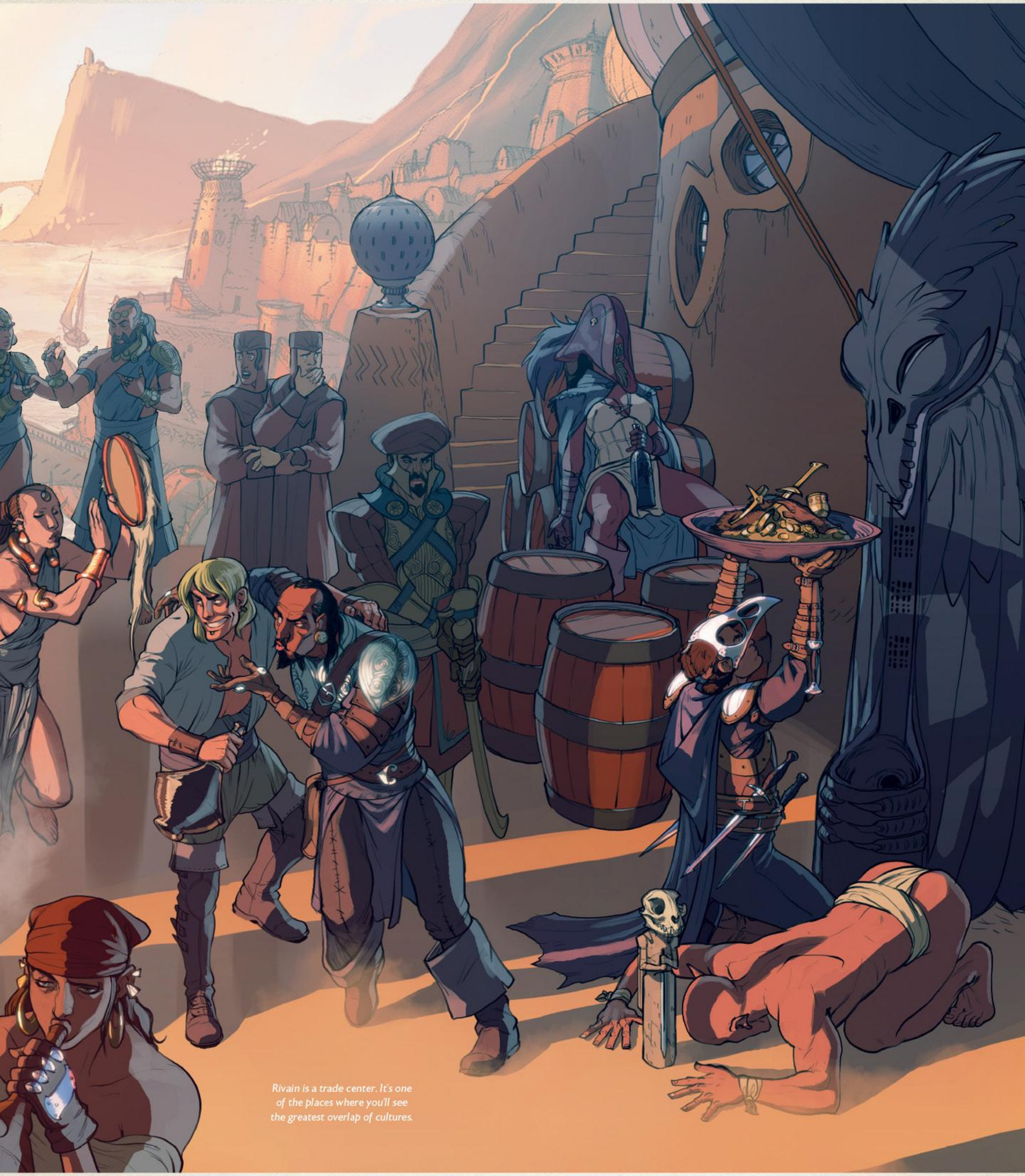




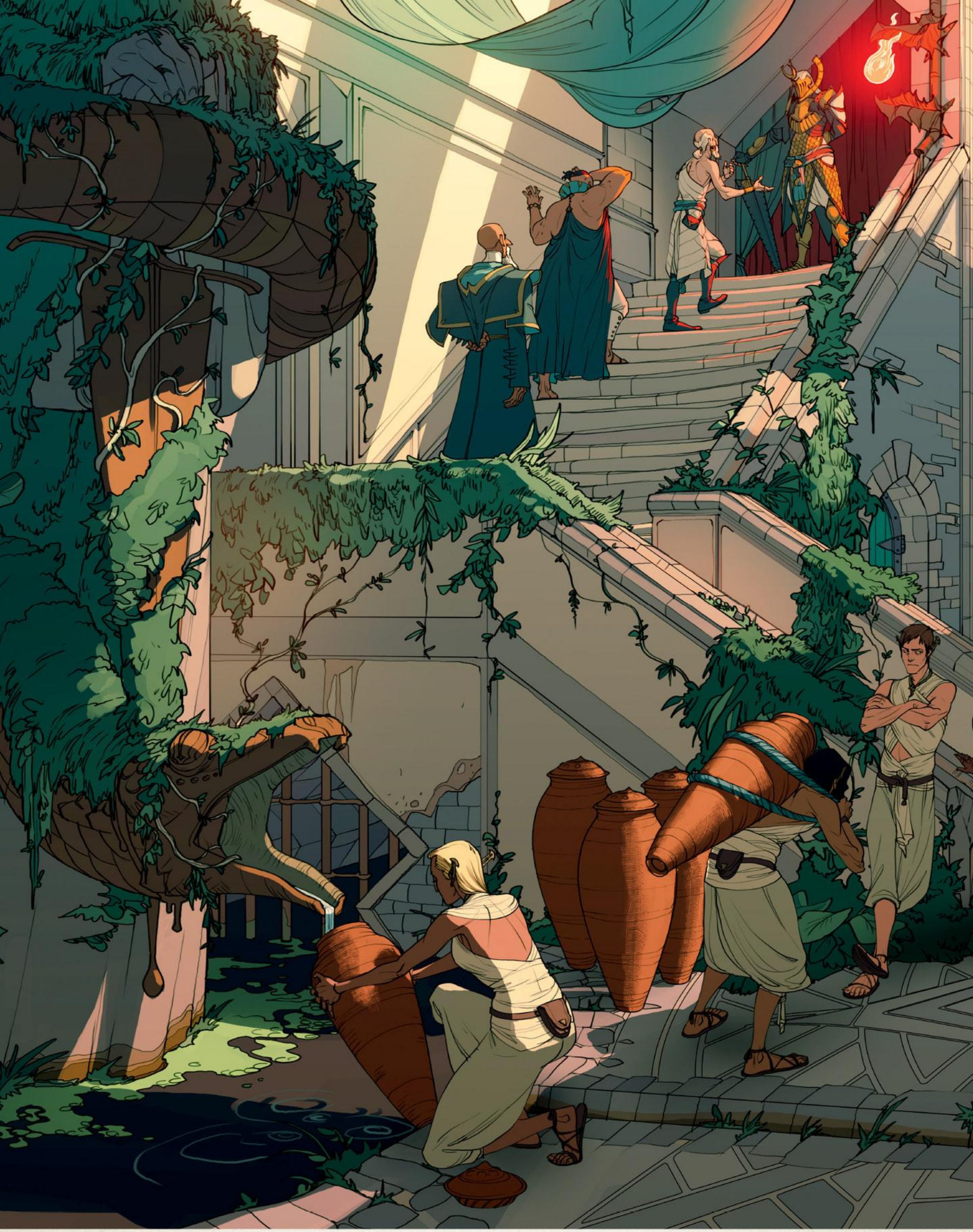
A wealthy Tevinter mansion. To show off, most of the house is built on top of a floating stone slab veined with lyrium. Visitors try not to think about what would happen if the magic was interrupted.

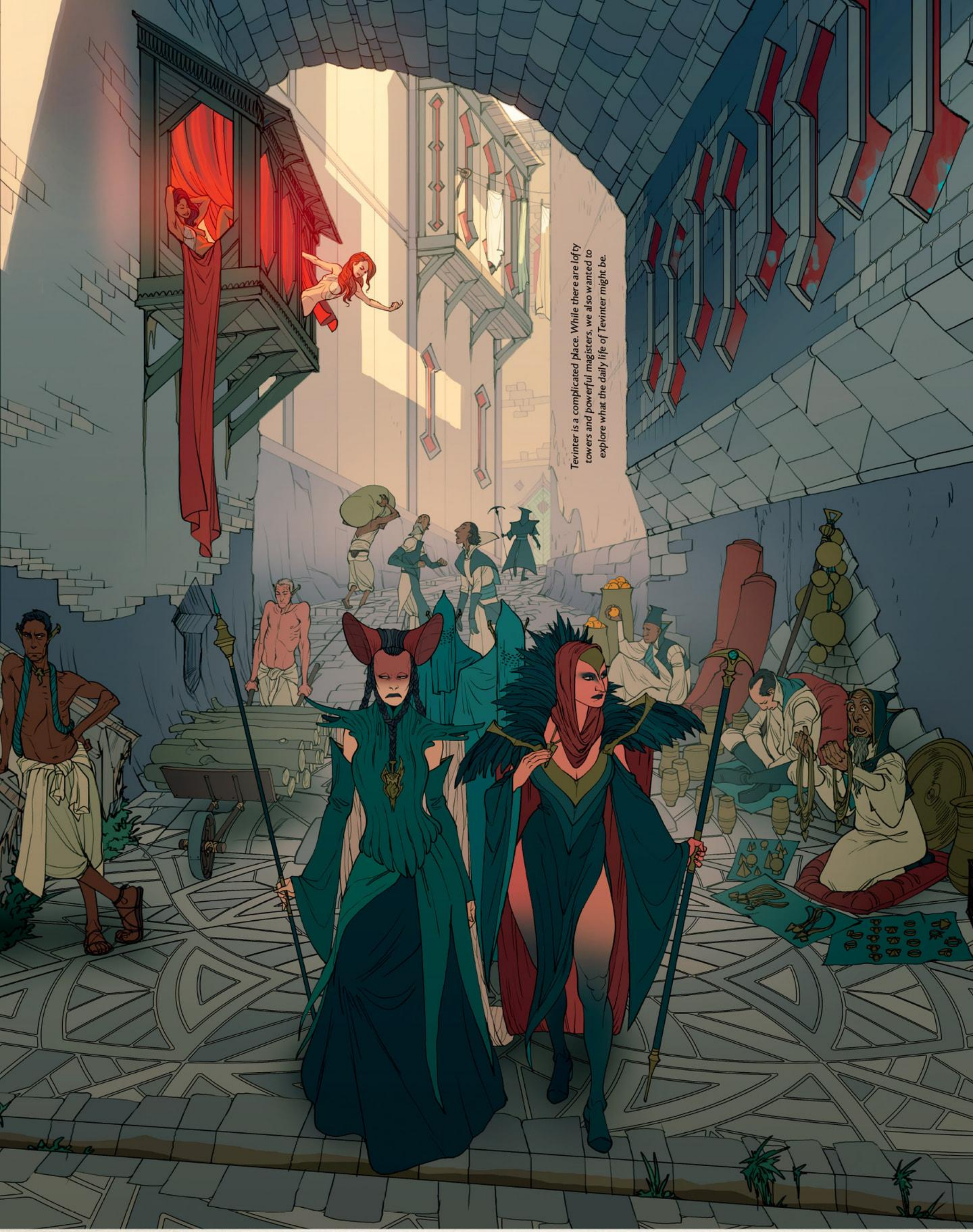


Slice-of-life illustrations like this weren't prescriptive, but they helped to explore the feel of certain regions we had only ever heard references to.

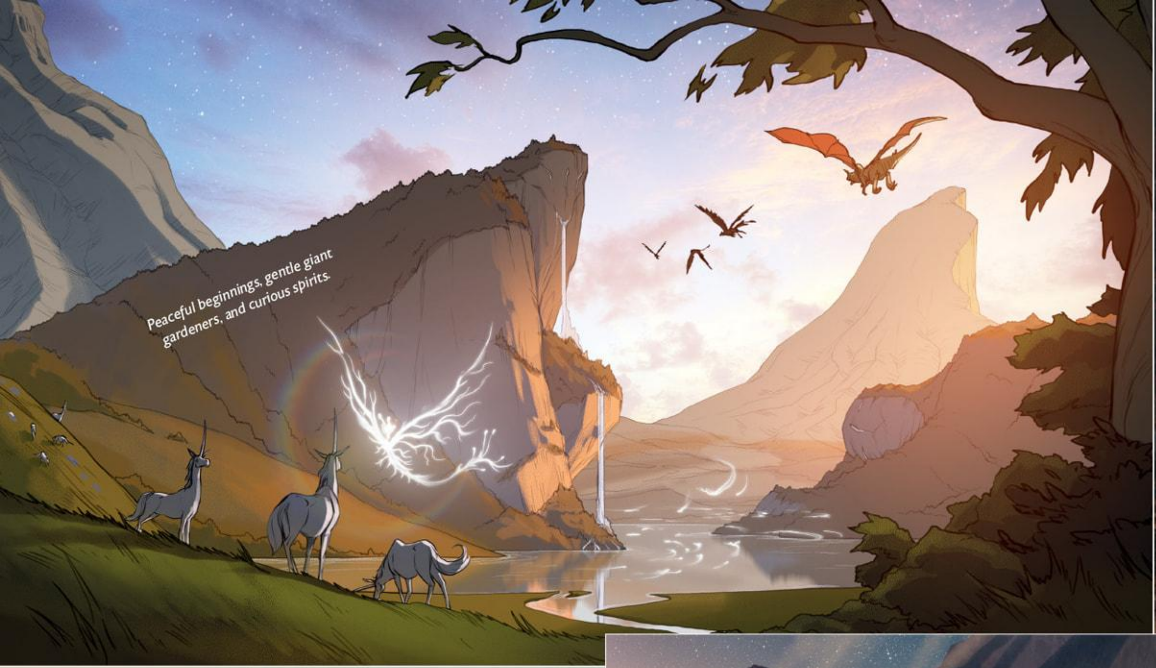


Rivain is a trade center. It's one of the places where you'll see the greatest overlap of cultures.

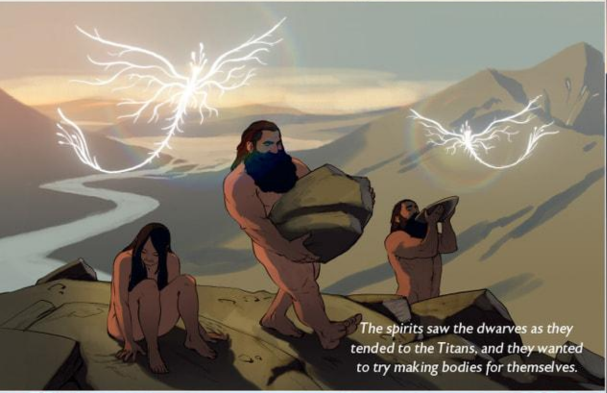




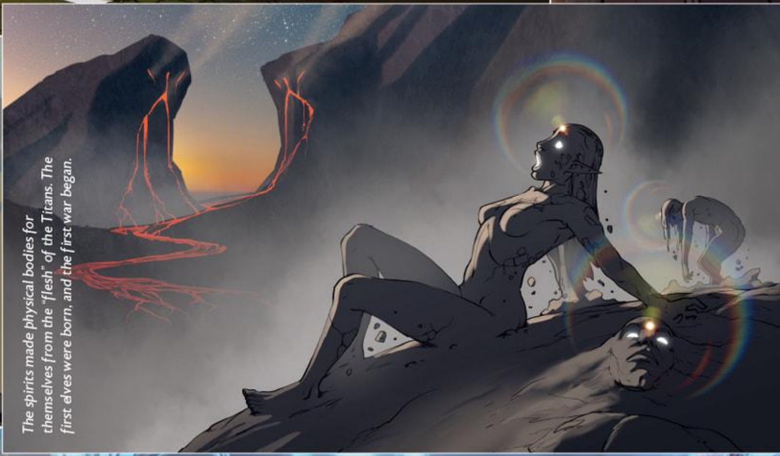
Tevinter is a complicated place. While there are lofty towers and powerful magisters, we also wanted to explore what the daily life of Tevinter might be.



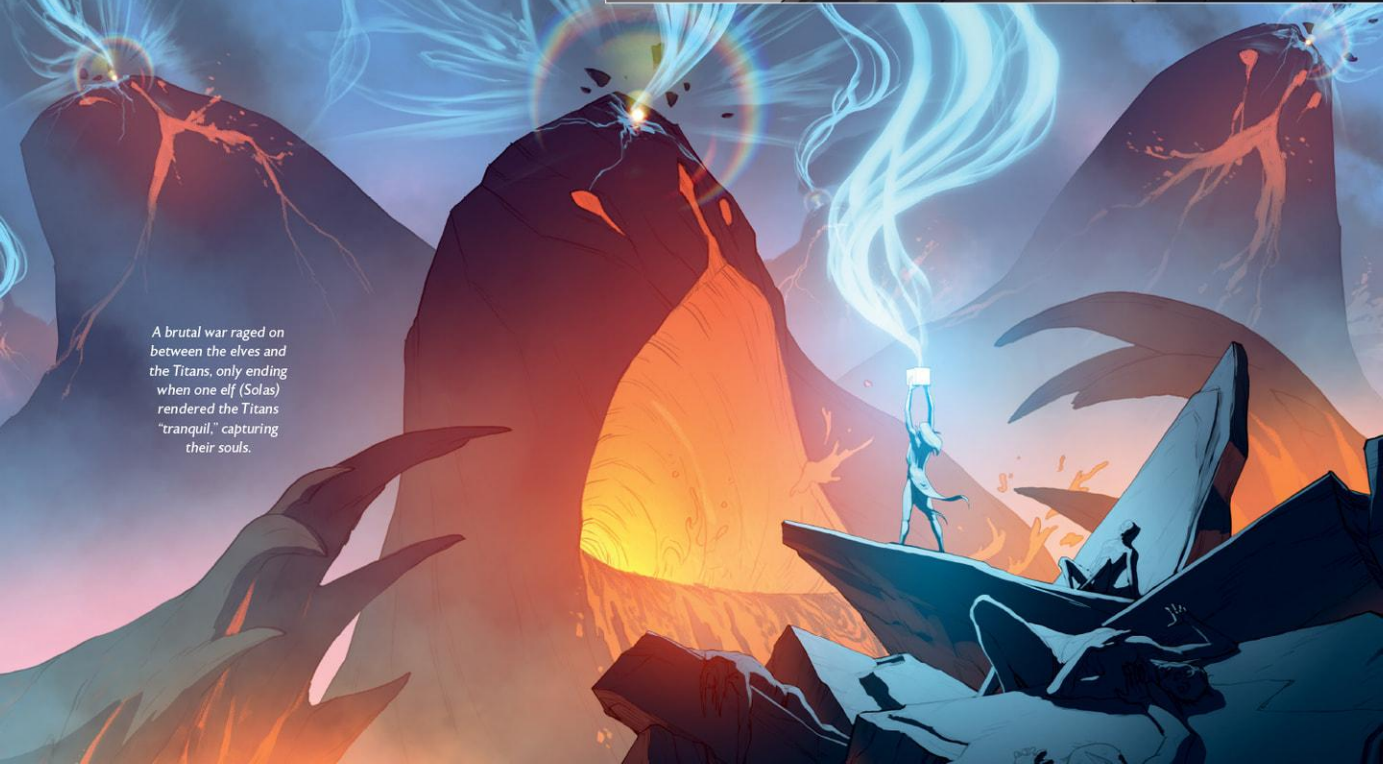
Peaceful beginnings, gentle giant gardeners, and curious spirits.



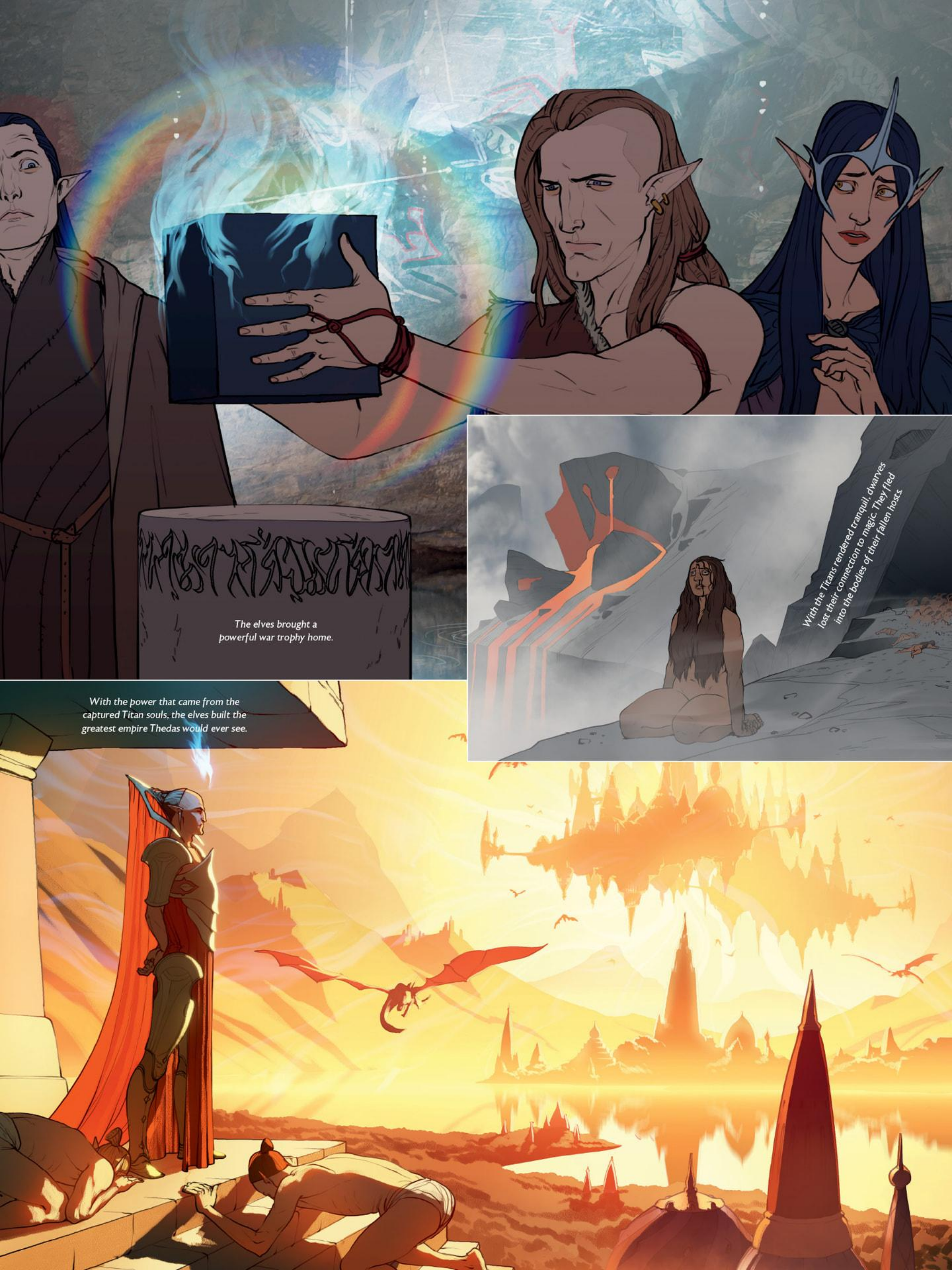
The spirits saw the dwarves as they tended to the Titans, and they wanted to try making bodies for themselves.

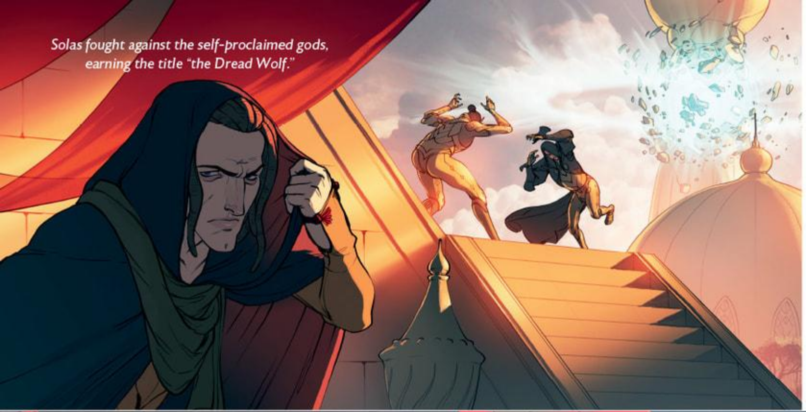


The spirits made physical bodies for themselves from the "flesh" of the Titans. The first elves were born, and the first war began.



A brutal war raged on between the elves and the Titans, only ending when one elf (Solas) rendered the Titans "tranquil," capturing their souls.

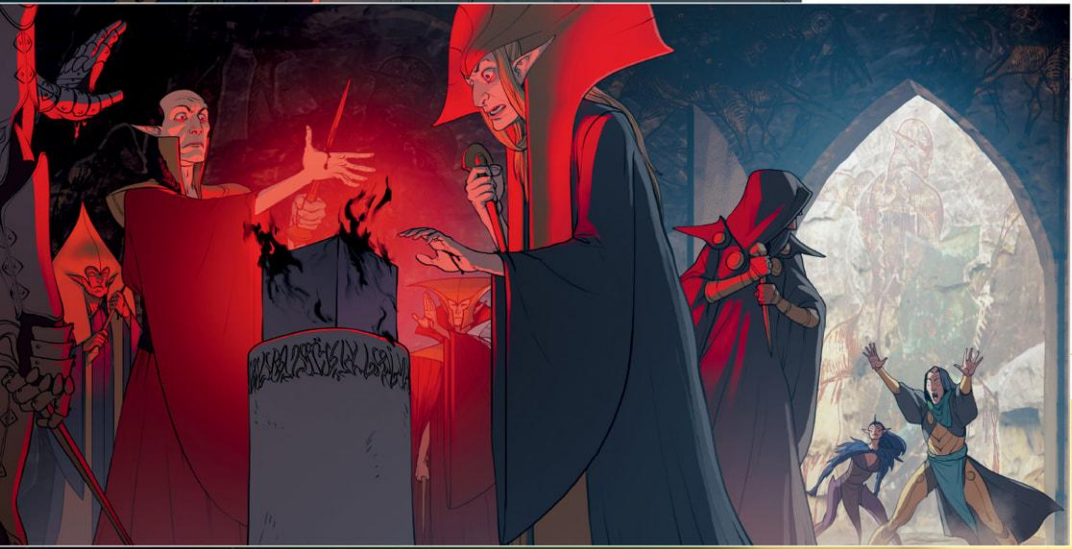

The elves brought a powerful war trophy home.
With the Titans rendered tranquil, dwarves lost their connection to magic. They fled into the bodies of their fallen hosts.
With the power that came from the captured Titan souls, the elves built the greatest empire Thedas would ever see.



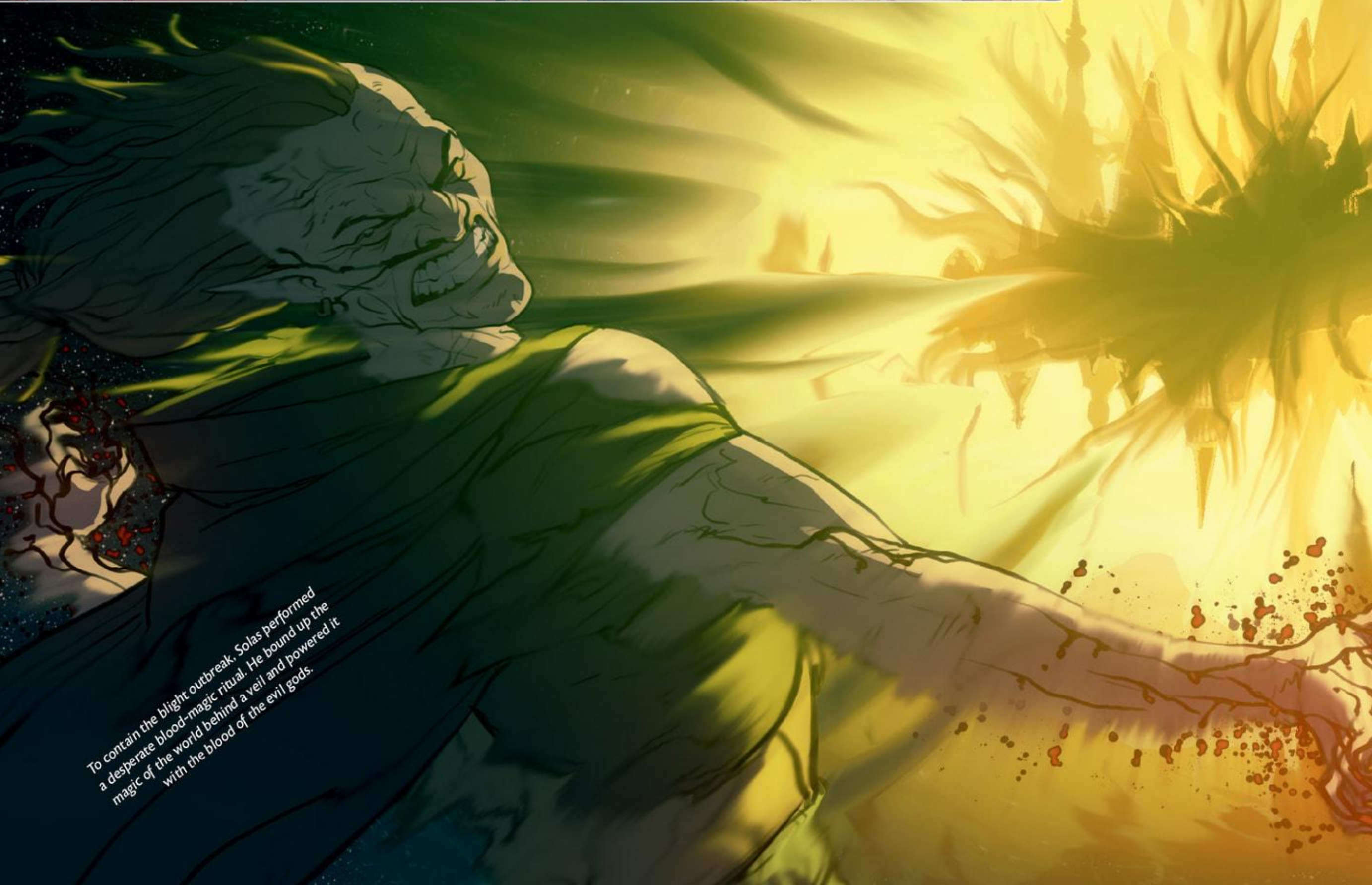
Solas fought against the self-proclaimed gods, earning the title "the Dread Wolf."

BLACK CODEX

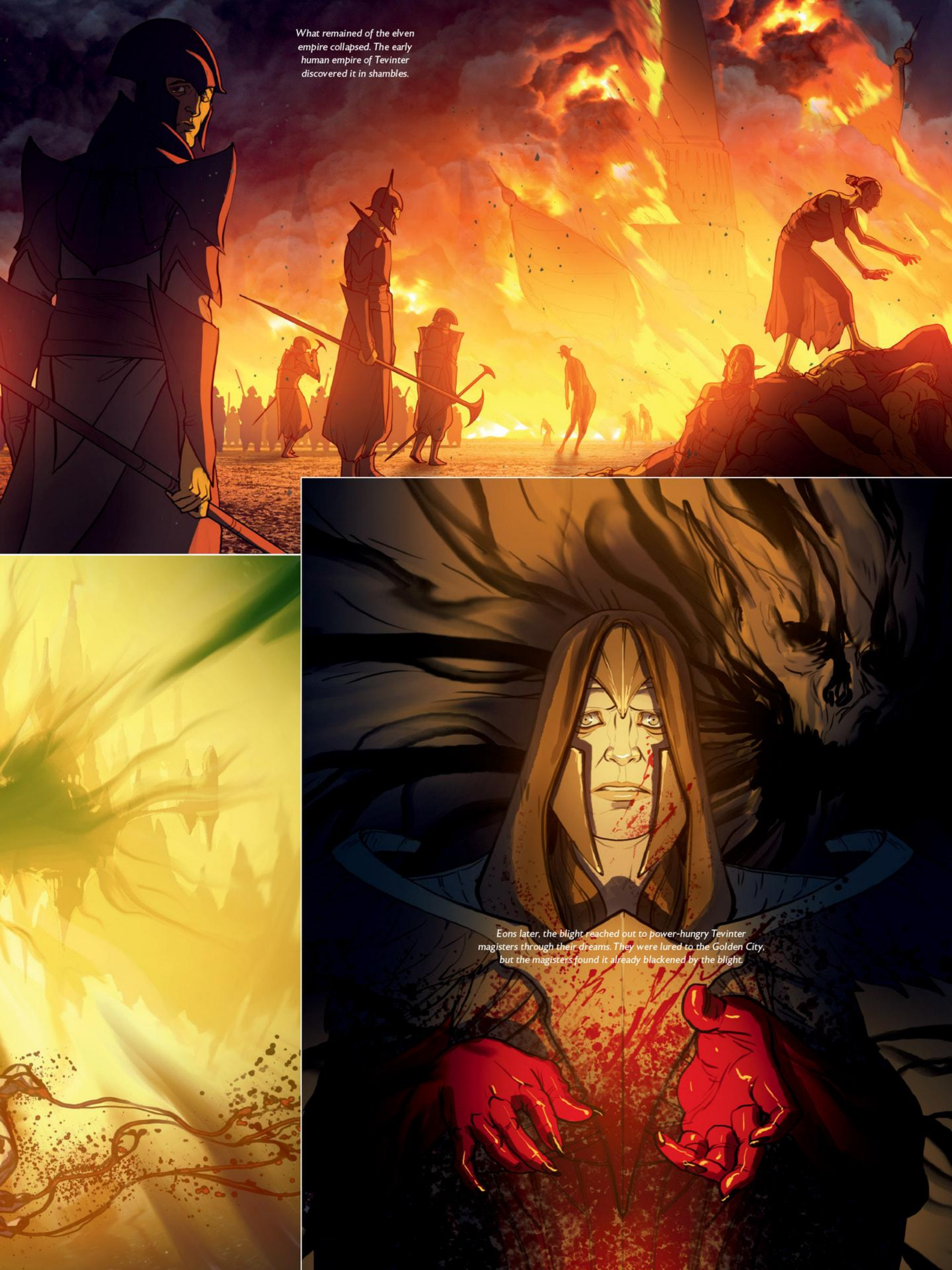
There was a top-secret document on BioWare's network that contained the objectively true history of Thedas called the Black Codex. Each culture had its perspective, its own emphasis and style, and over time more was added and taken away. It was decided to reveal a lot of truth in this game, so early on we wanted to illustrate the Black Codex. This would help to act as a visual guide to the events that formed Thedas as we know it.



The gods drew upon the power of the Titans' souls to gain more power. The imprisoned souls became twisted with rage. This became the blight.

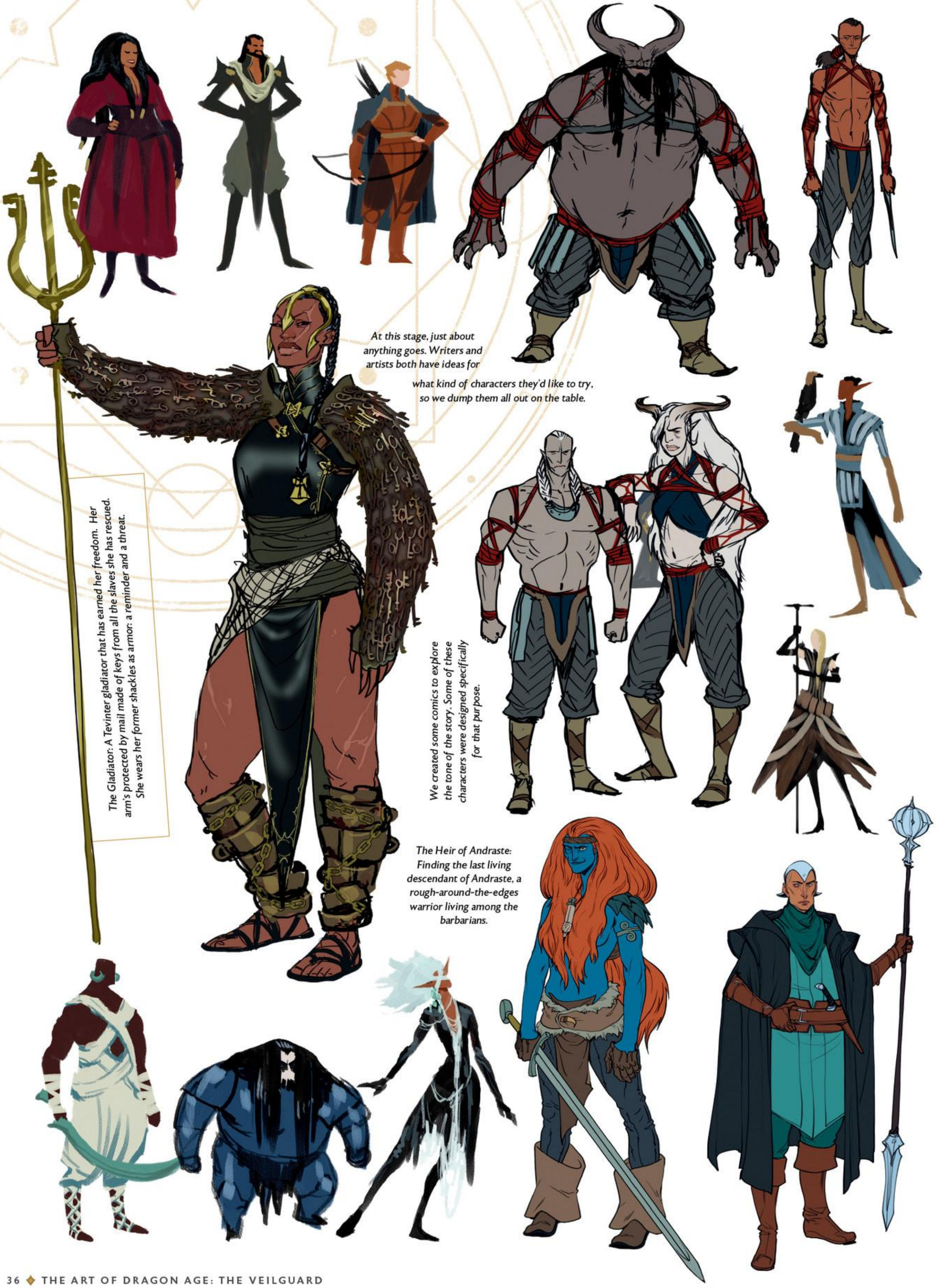


To contain the blight outbreak, Solas performed a desperate blood-magic ritual. He bound up the magic of the world behind a veil and powered it with the blood of the evil gods.



What remained of the elven empire collapsed. The early human empire of Tevinter discovered it in shambles.

Eons later, the blight reached out to power-hungry Tevinter magisters through their dreams. They were lured to the Golden City, but the magisters found it already blackened by the blight.



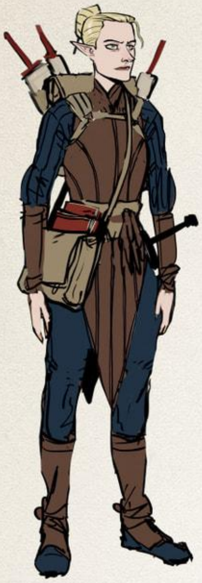
At this stage, just about anything goes. Writers and artists both have ideas for what kind of characters they'd like to try, so we dump them all out on the table.

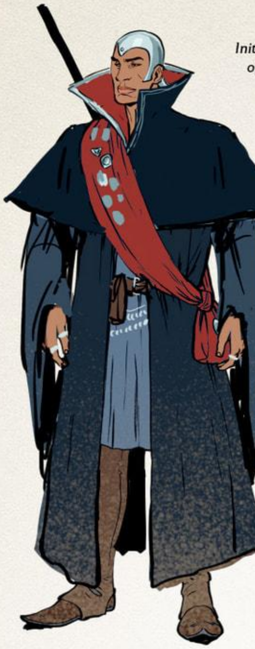
The Gladiator: A Tevinter gladiator that has earned her freedom. Her arm's protected by mail made of keys from all the slaves she has rescued. She wears her former shackles as armor: a reminder and a threat.

We created some comics to explore the tone of the story. Some of these characters were designed specifically for that purpose.

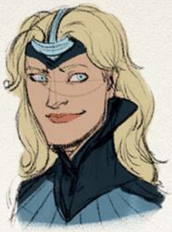
The Heir of Andraste: Finding the last living descendant of Andraste, a rough-around-the-edges warrior living among the barbarians.

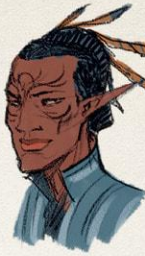
The academic and the mage college scholar forced into the field.

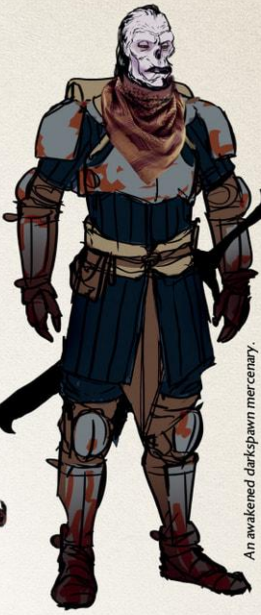




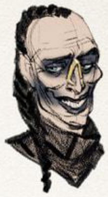
Initially we work from very simple premises, often only a couple of words, like "happy necromancer" or "Qunari assassin."

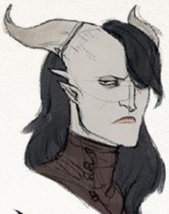


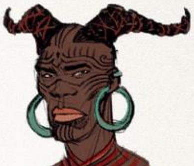


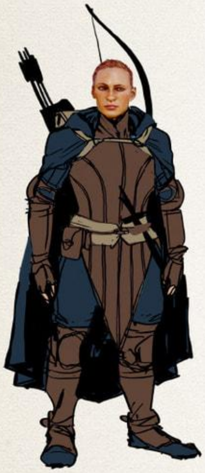


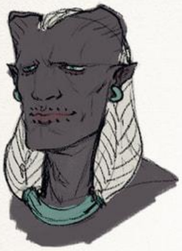
An awakened darkspawn mercenary.

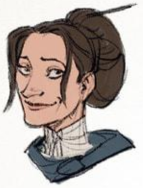


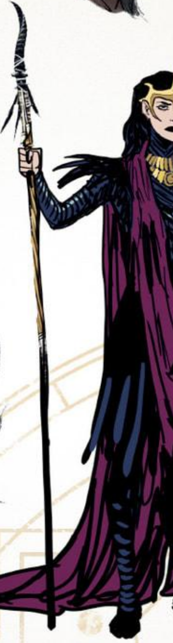


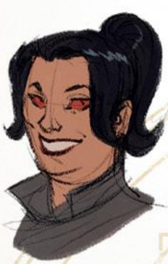


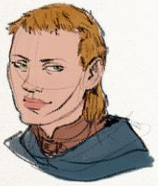


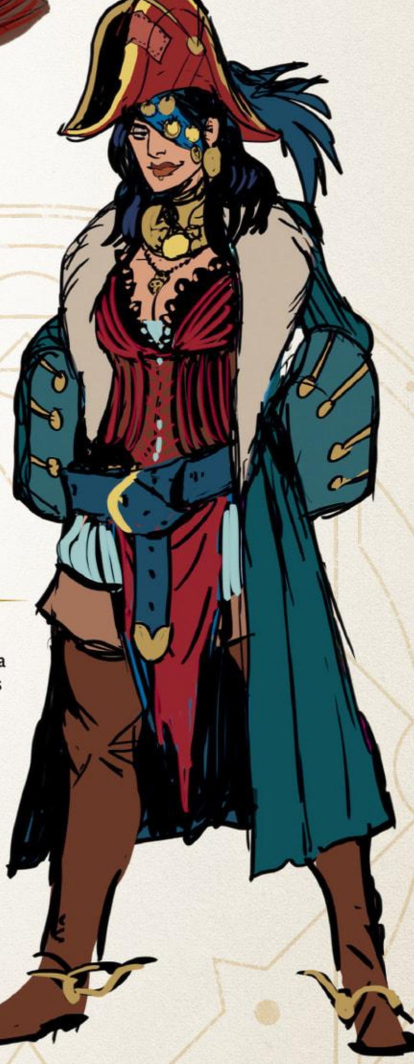


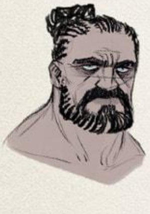


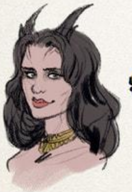


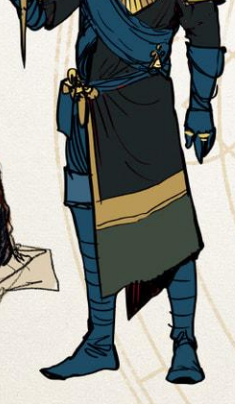


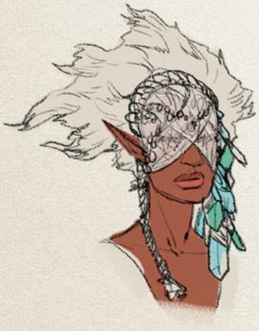


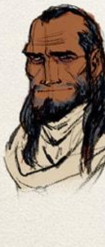






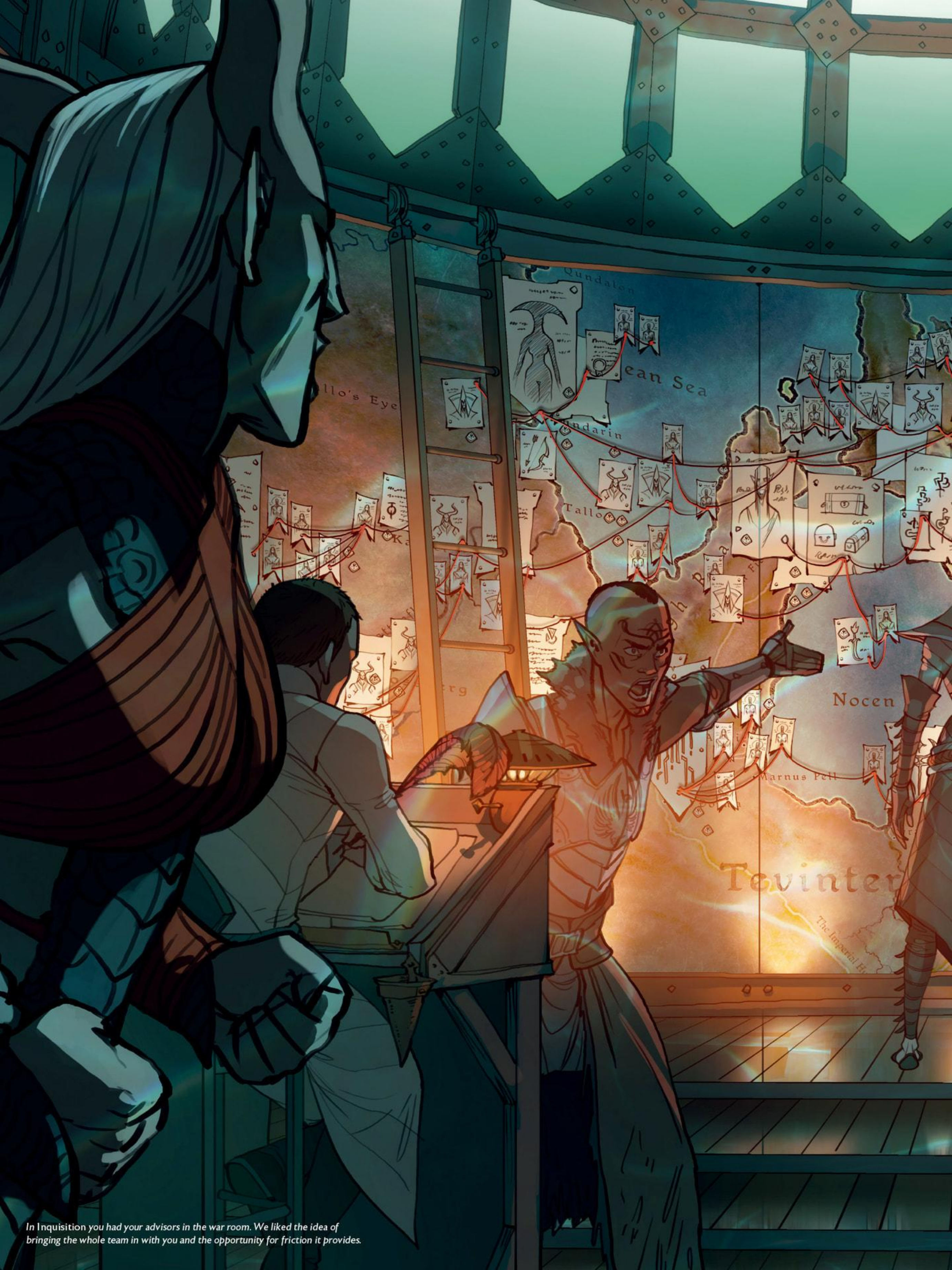






ADVISORS

Early on we thought about creating a new set of advisors for your ship. It's satisfying to revisit characters from previous games, especially if time has passed. It's a chance to try to make their story visible. In this case, we see a Morrigan that has embraced her new gift, who can offer insights into the mysteries of magic and the ancient elven world. This version of Dorian is like Mathis from *Casino Royale*, someone who can advise you through all the ins and outs of Tevinter culture. Smuggler Admiral Isabela can get you into and out of just about any port in Thedas.


Qundalon
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Marnus Pell
Tevinter
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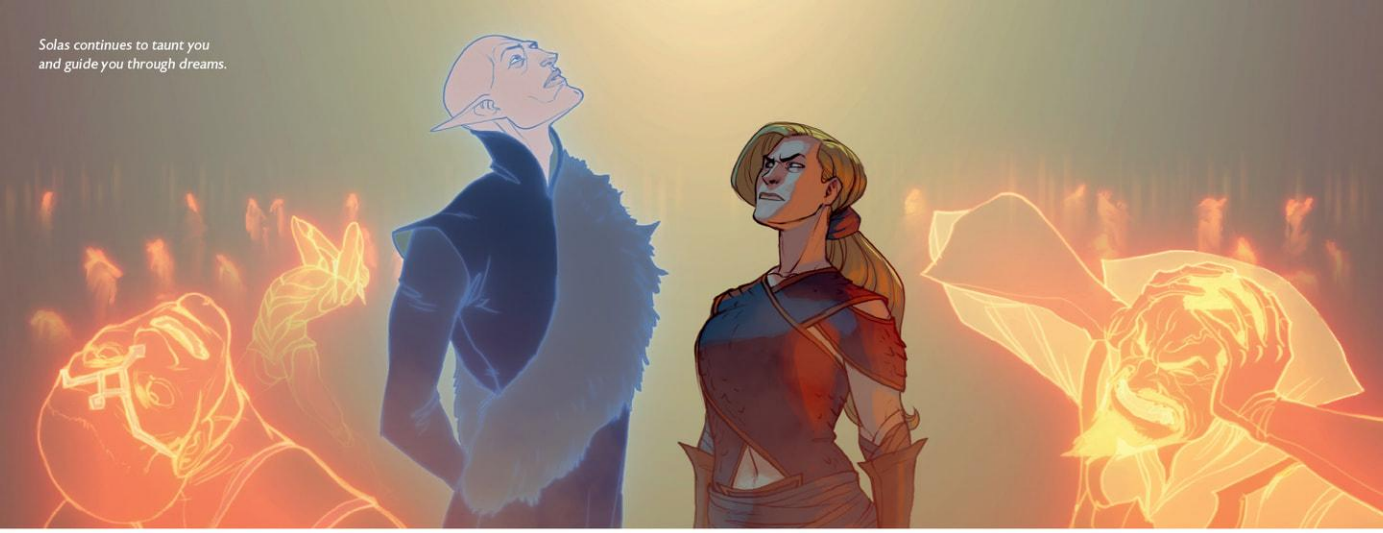
In Inquisition *you had your advisors in the war room. We liked the idea of bringing the whole team in with you and the opportunity for friction it provides.*

PART TWO

JOPLIN

The Hundred
vantium



Solas continues to taunt you and guide you through dreams.

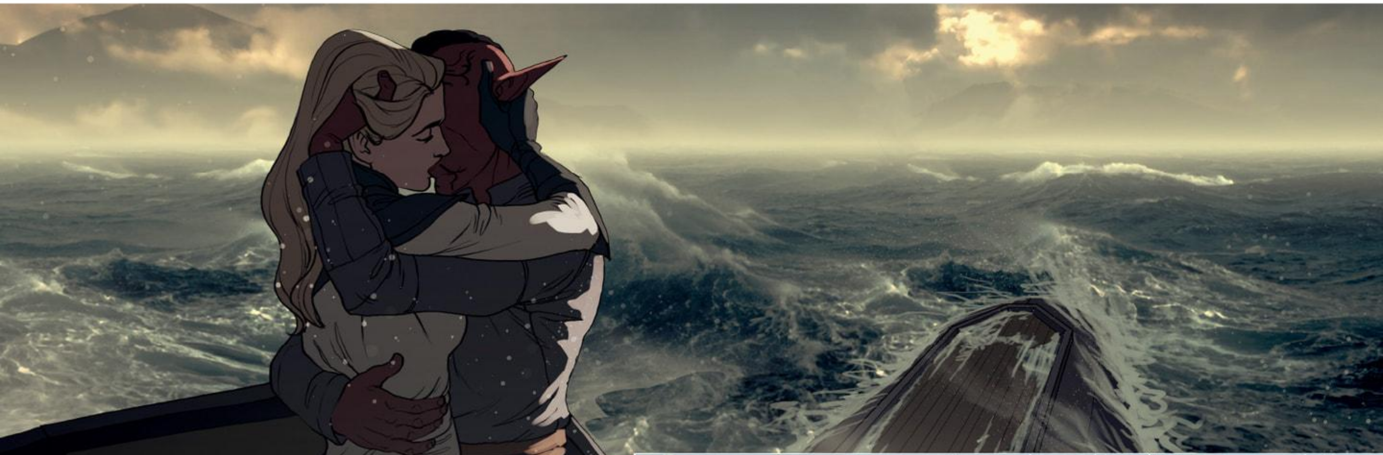
STORY ART

After *Dragon Age: Inquisition* shipped, and all the DLC was complete, we focused our full attention on the sequel. It was going to have a fantasy spy theme, which was eventually modified to "covert commandos." We were traveling to a new part of the map to hunt down the most dangerous man in the world.

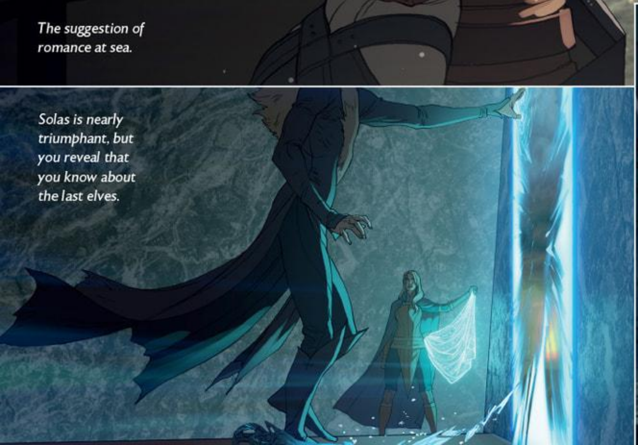
The beat boards continued. As the story started to take real shape, we asked if the artists could be moved into the same room as the writers. We could then get real-time updates to the story and create quick storyboards. Previously, most people working on the game didn't know the full story until all the pieces had been put together in a take-home build (months from shipping the final game). For the first time ever, we could show the whole team what the story was intended to be near the beginning of the project, rather than the end. The biggest benefit of this was that the story could receive feedback from a wider cross-discipline audience and could then be iterated on more than ever before.

This also helped unblock the art team in an unprecedented way. Being able to look at the whole story in one glance meant that we could begin to prioritize our efforts. For example, we could tell which locations would feature most heavily, so we could spend more time designing their architecture, props, and clothing.

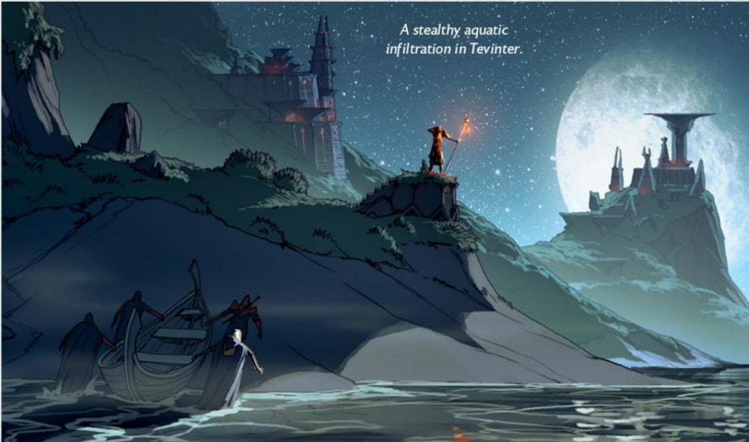
It also forced us to do quick first-pass designs without overthinking, knowing that later we could come back and refine things if they changed. This method takes a lot of pressure off and prevents things from feeling "overbaked."



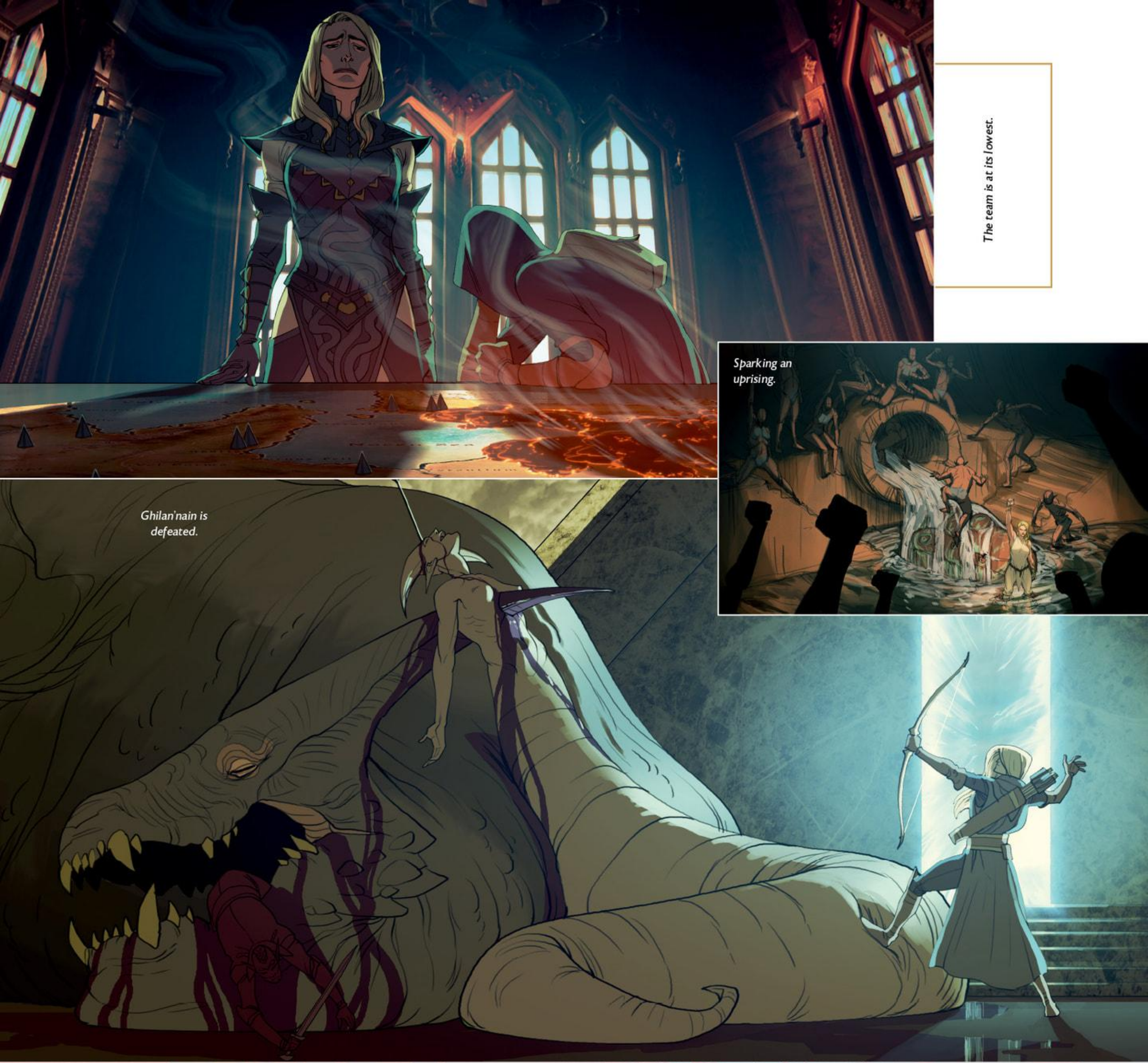
The suggestion of romance at sea.



Solas is nearly triumphant, but you reveal that you know about the last elves.



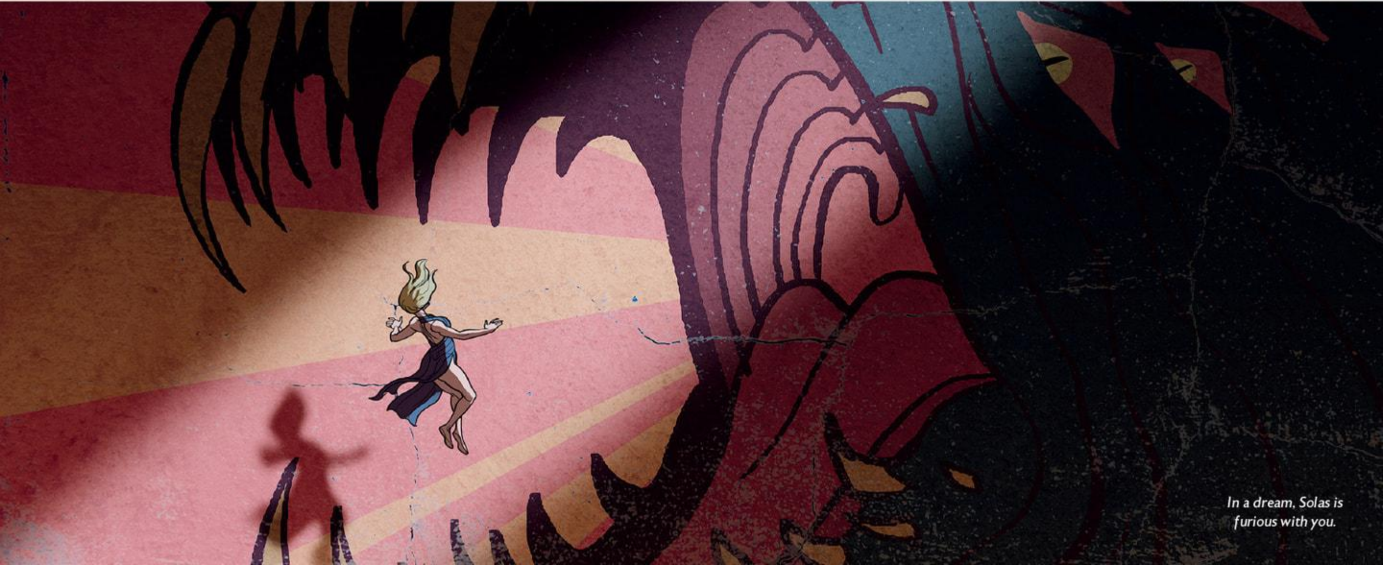
A stealthy aquatic infiltration in Tevinter.



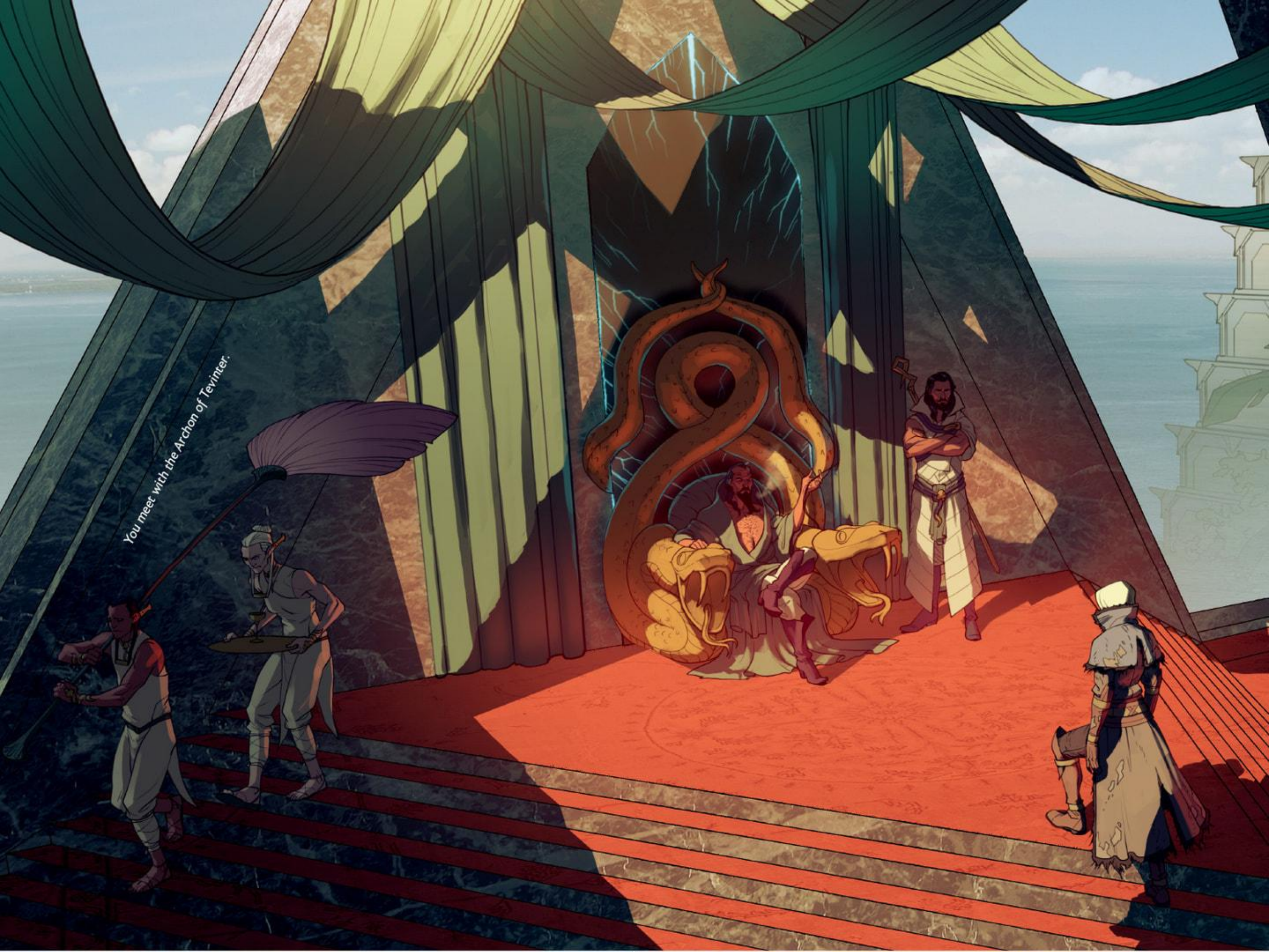
The team is at its lowest.

Sparking an uprising.

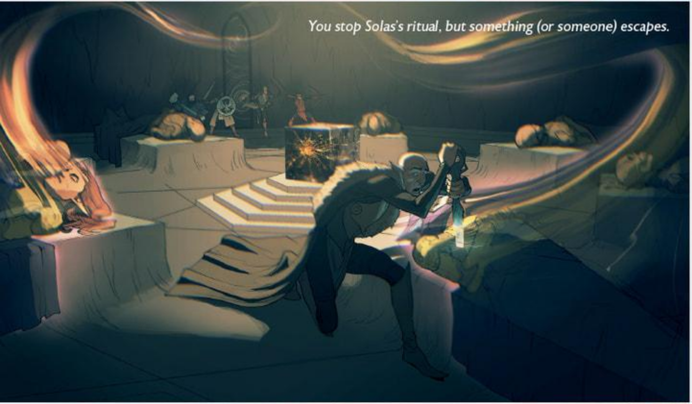
Ghilan'nain is defeated.



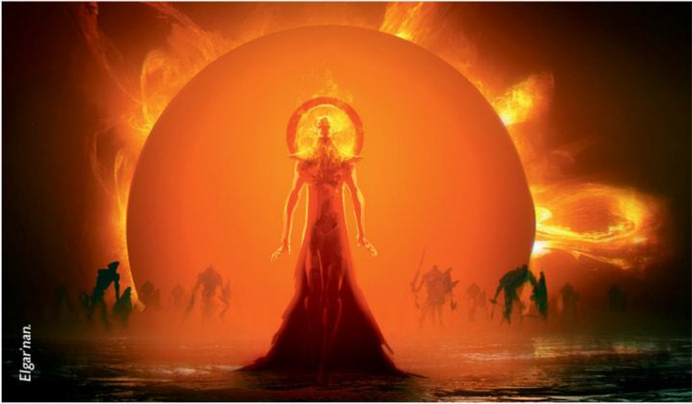
In a dream, Solas is furious with you.



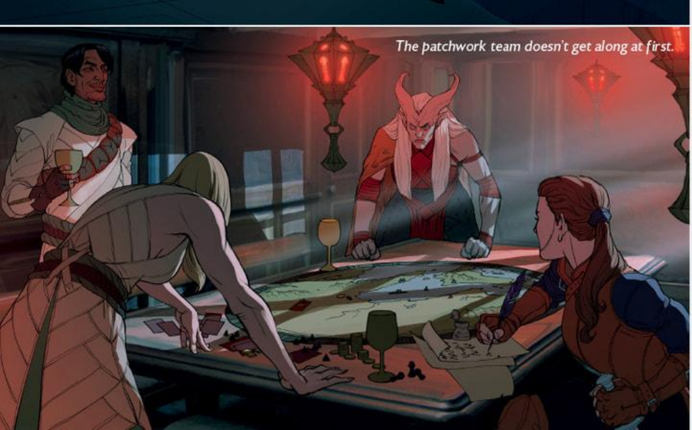
You meet with the Archon of Tevinter.



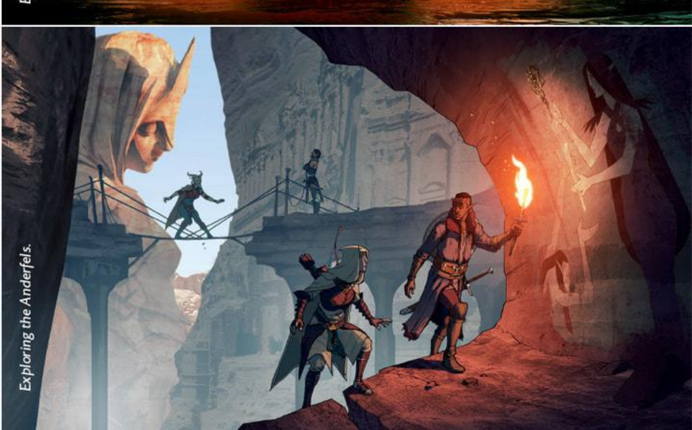
You stop Solas's ritual, but something (or someone) escapes.



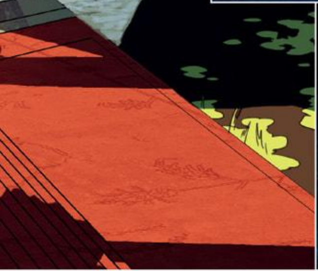
Elgar'nan.

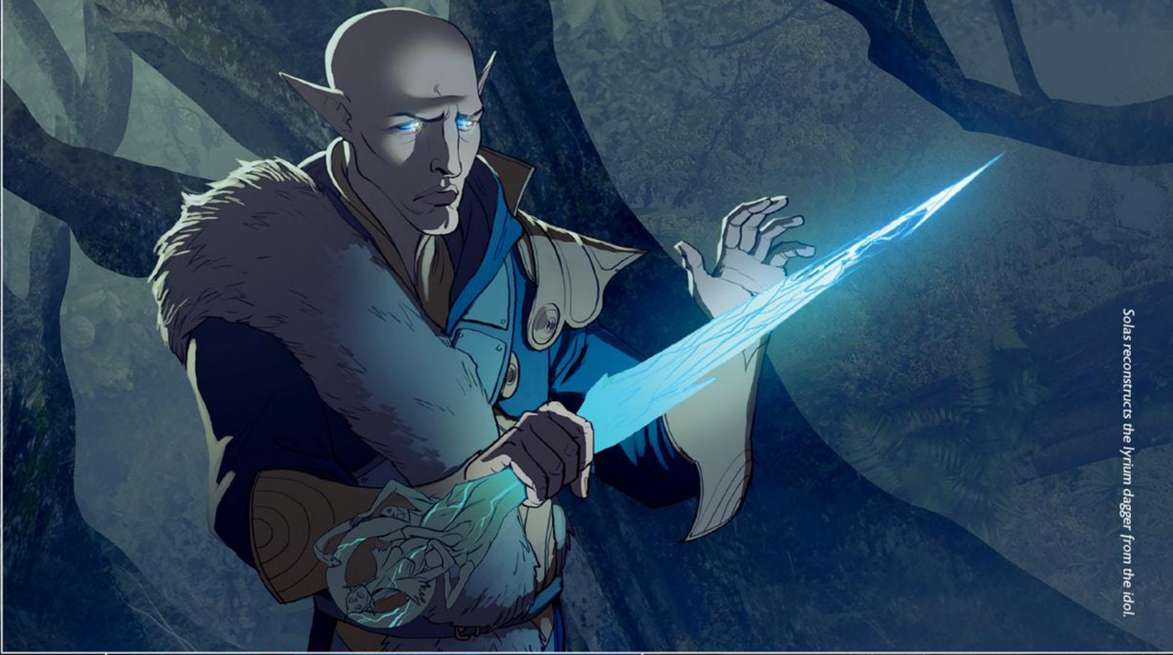


The patchwork team doesn't get along at first.

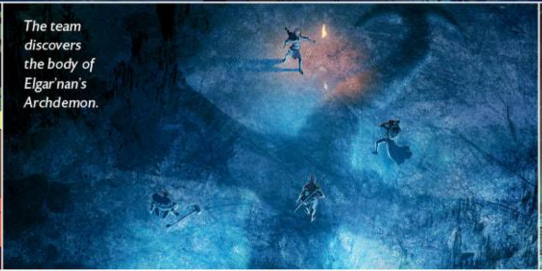


Exploring the Anderfels.

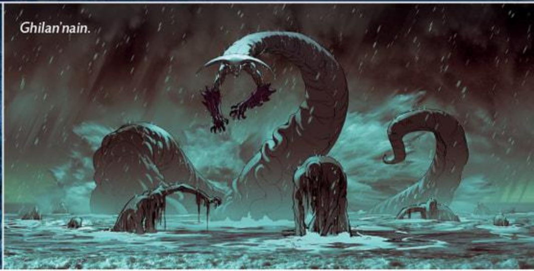




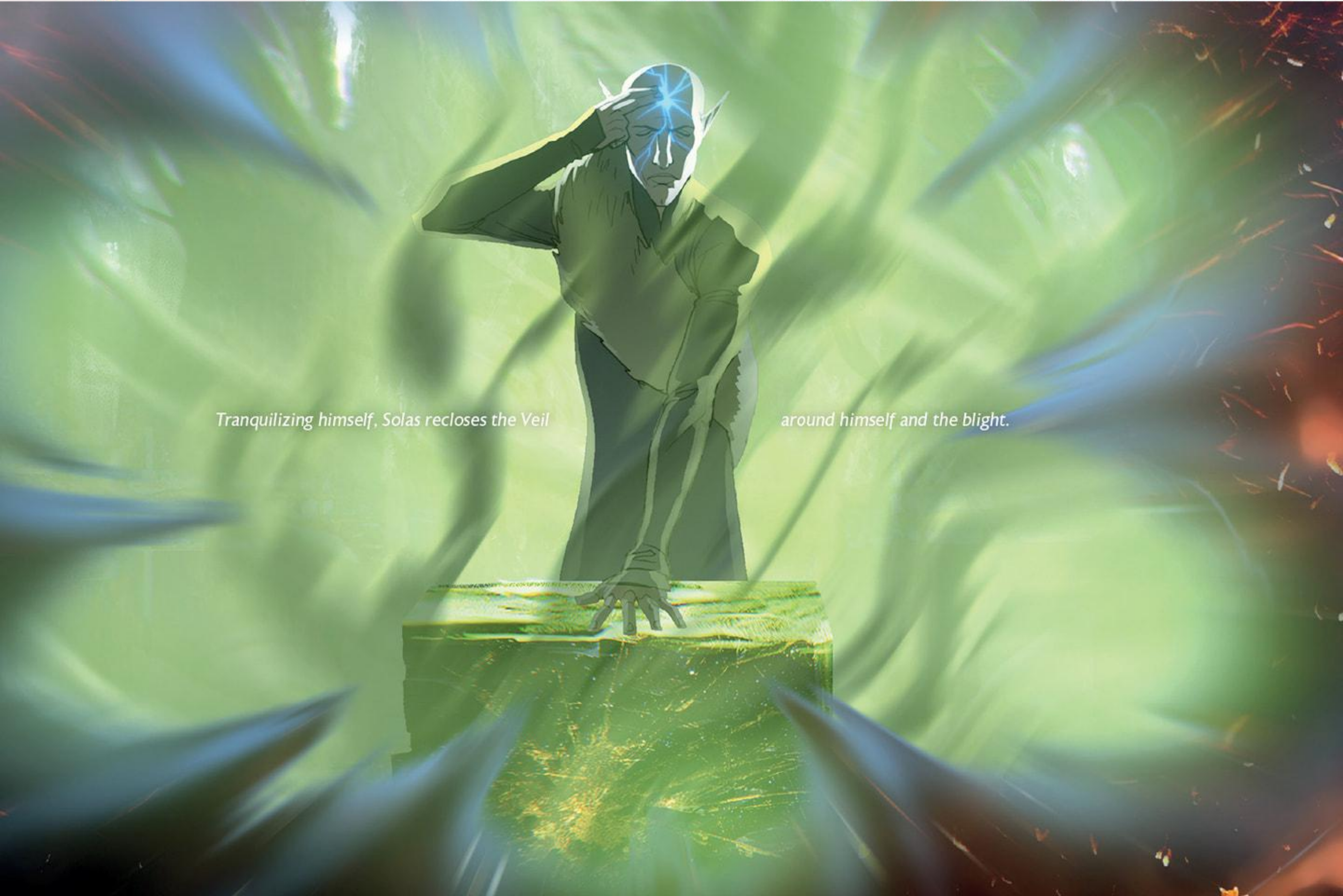
Solas reconstructs the lyrium dagger from the idol.



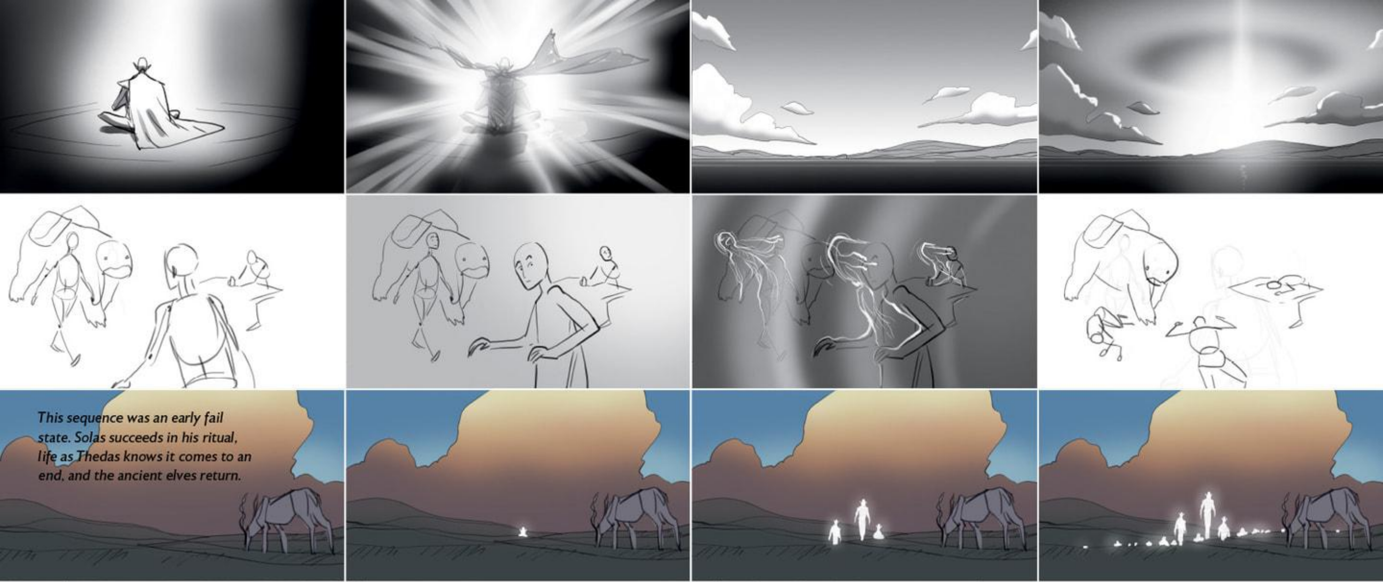
The team discovers the body of Elgar'nan's Archdemon.



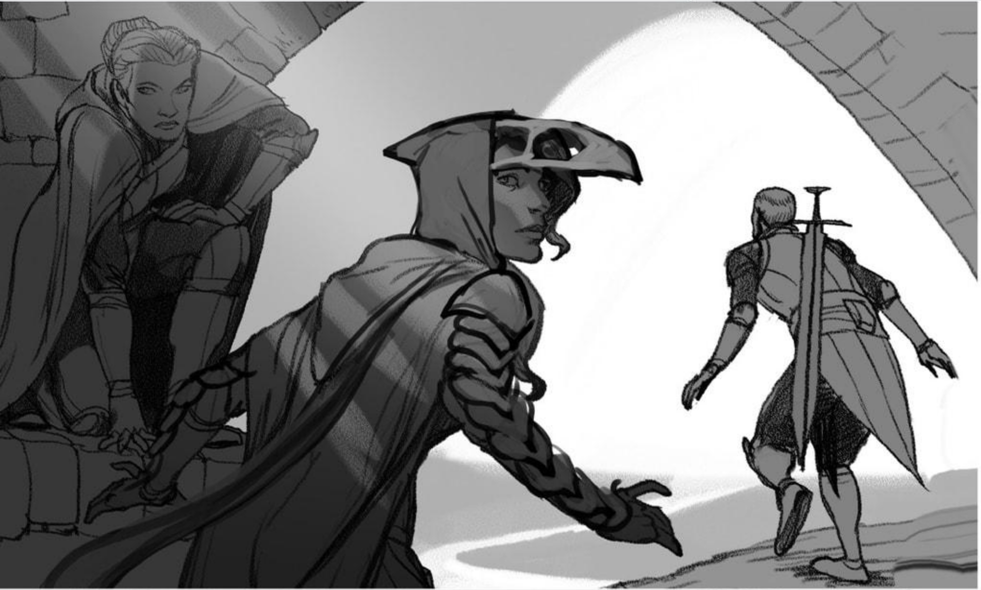
Ghilan'nain.



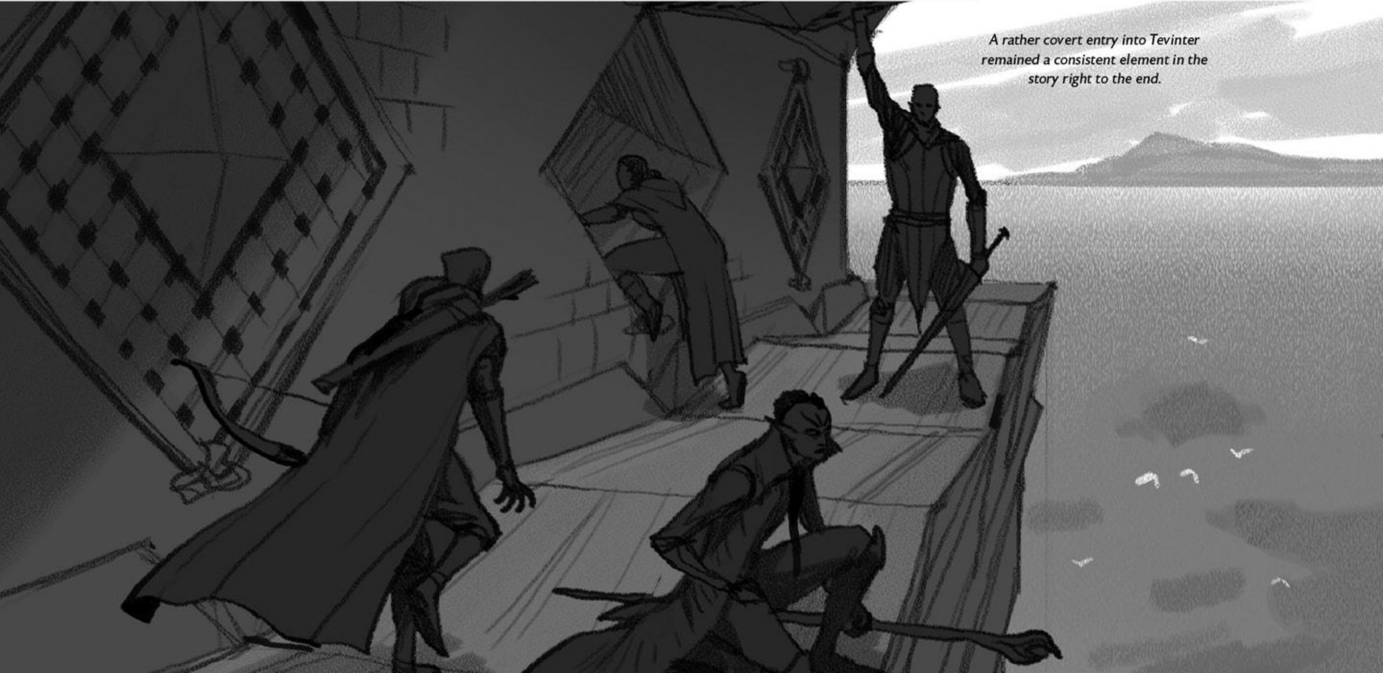
Tranquilizing himself, Solas recloses the Veil around himself and the blight.



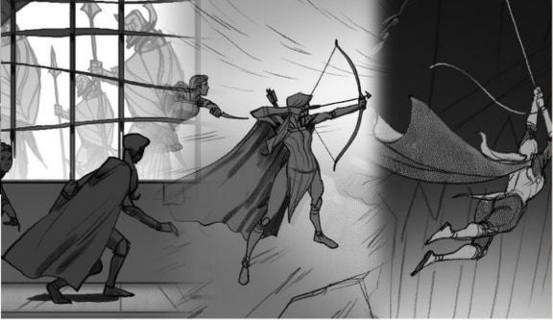
This sequence was an early fail state. Solas succeeds in his ritual, life as Thedas knows it comes to an end, and the ancient elves return.

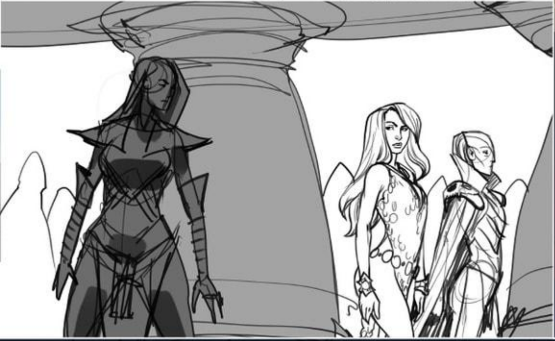


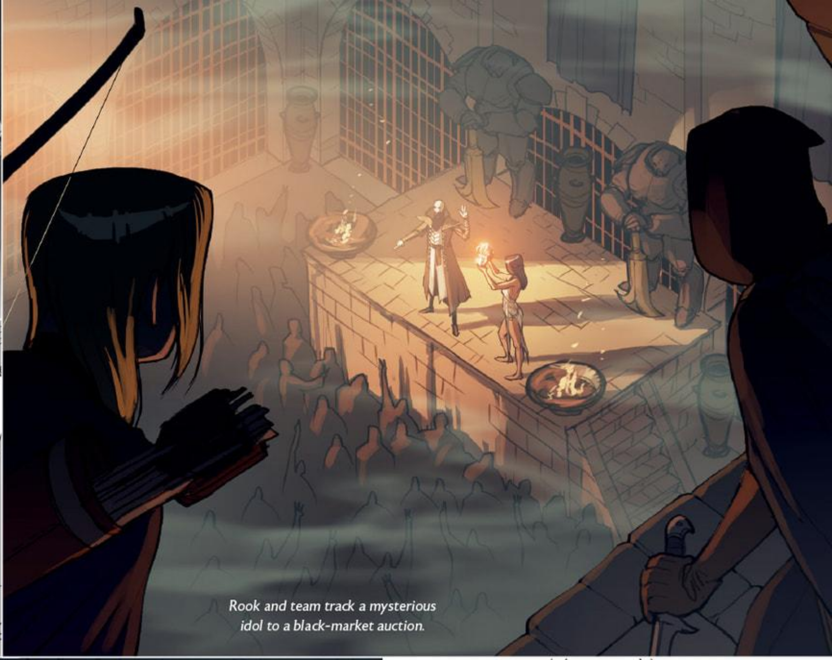
Storyboards had played a critical role in the development of *Inquisition*. We wanted to integrate them into our process even earlier. To that end, we created an interactive storyboard. Starting with the early drafts of the story, we sketched it all out, including any major choices. These boards were then stitched together into a playable choose-your-own-adventure-style game. It meant that years before the real game was up on its feet, an early draft of the entire story could be played from beginning to end. This was invaluable in receiving early feedback from the team and planning out what visuals would be needed to support the game.



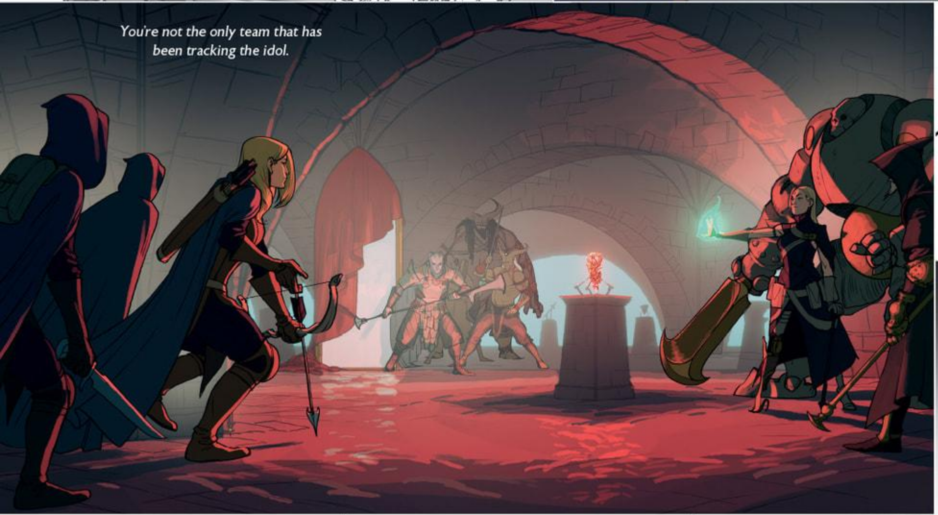
A rather covert entry into Tevinter remained a consistent element in the story right to the end.



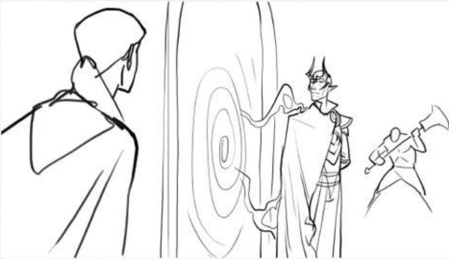


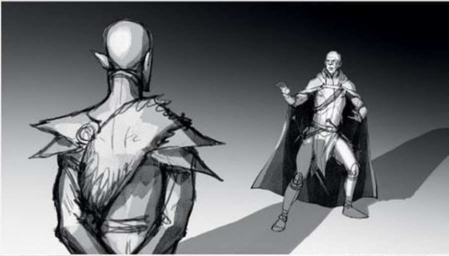


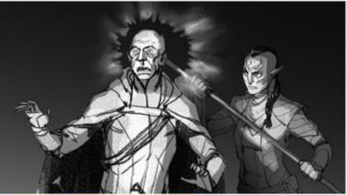
Rook and team track a mysterious idol to a black-market auction.

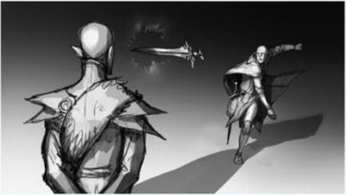


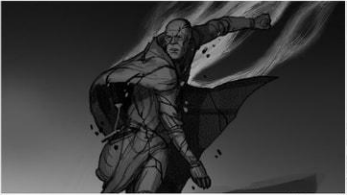
You're not the only team that has been tracking the idol.

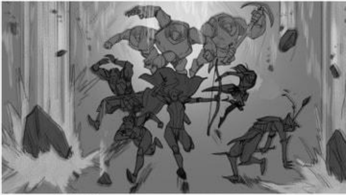


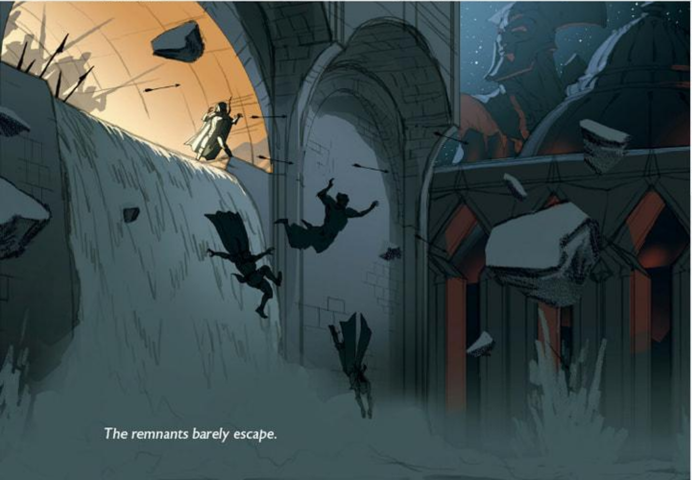




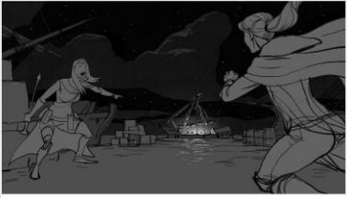


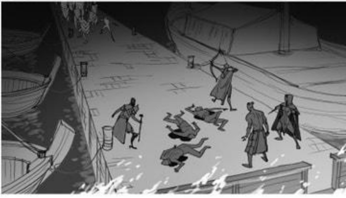




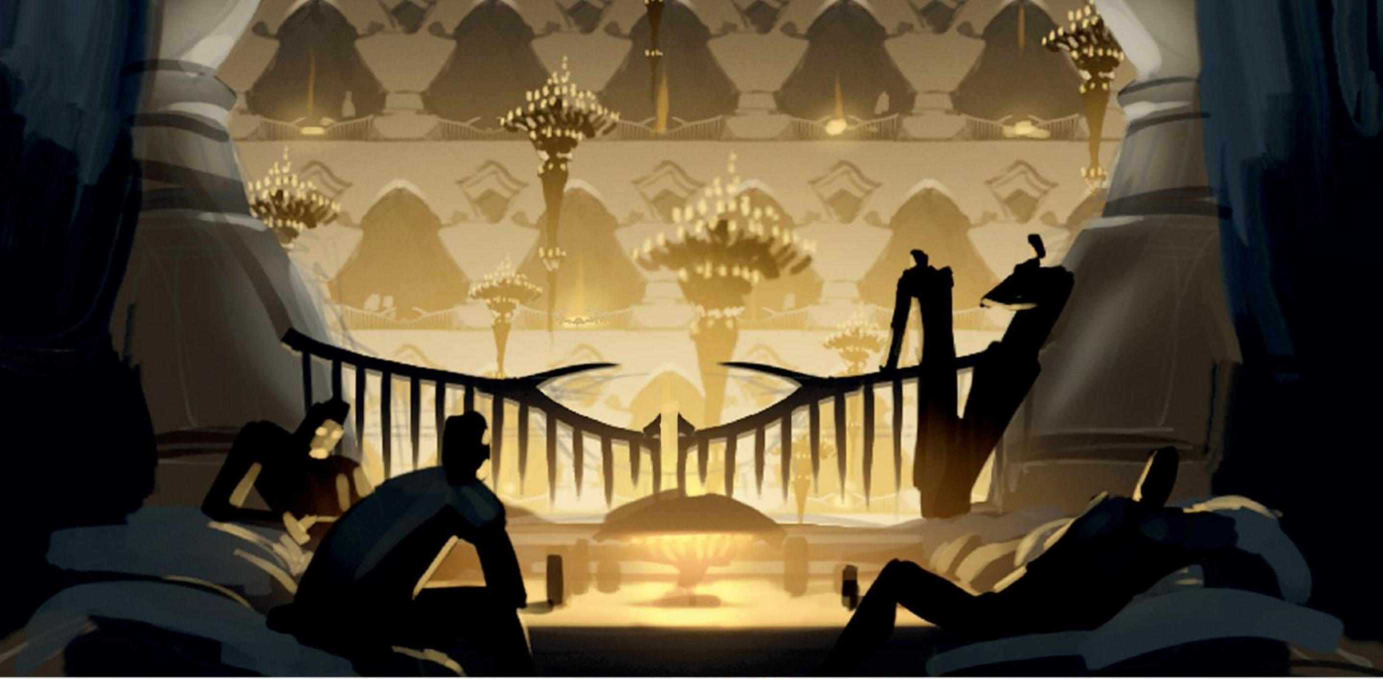


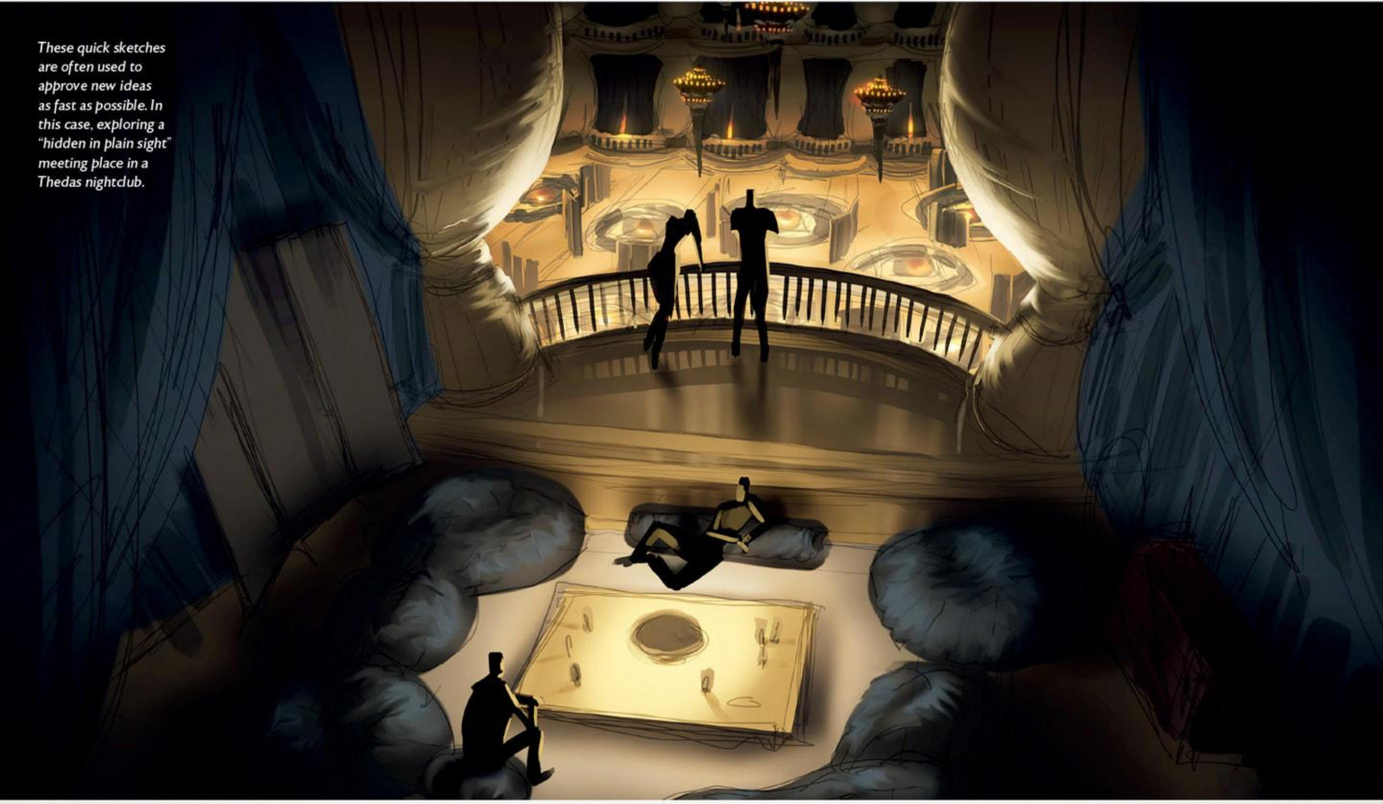
The remnants barely escape.



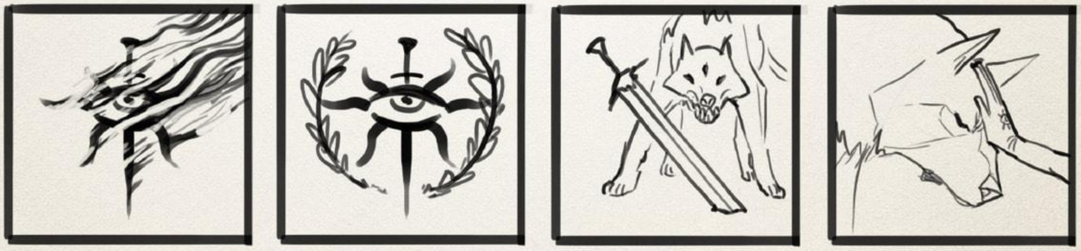


While we worked quickly, these sketches helped reveal where to best spend our efforts later. It turned out we spent far more time in particular locations. Some factions were over- or under-represented. In one case we discovered a unique creature that would have taken ages to build but would only have appeared for ten seconds before disappearing forever (it was cut).

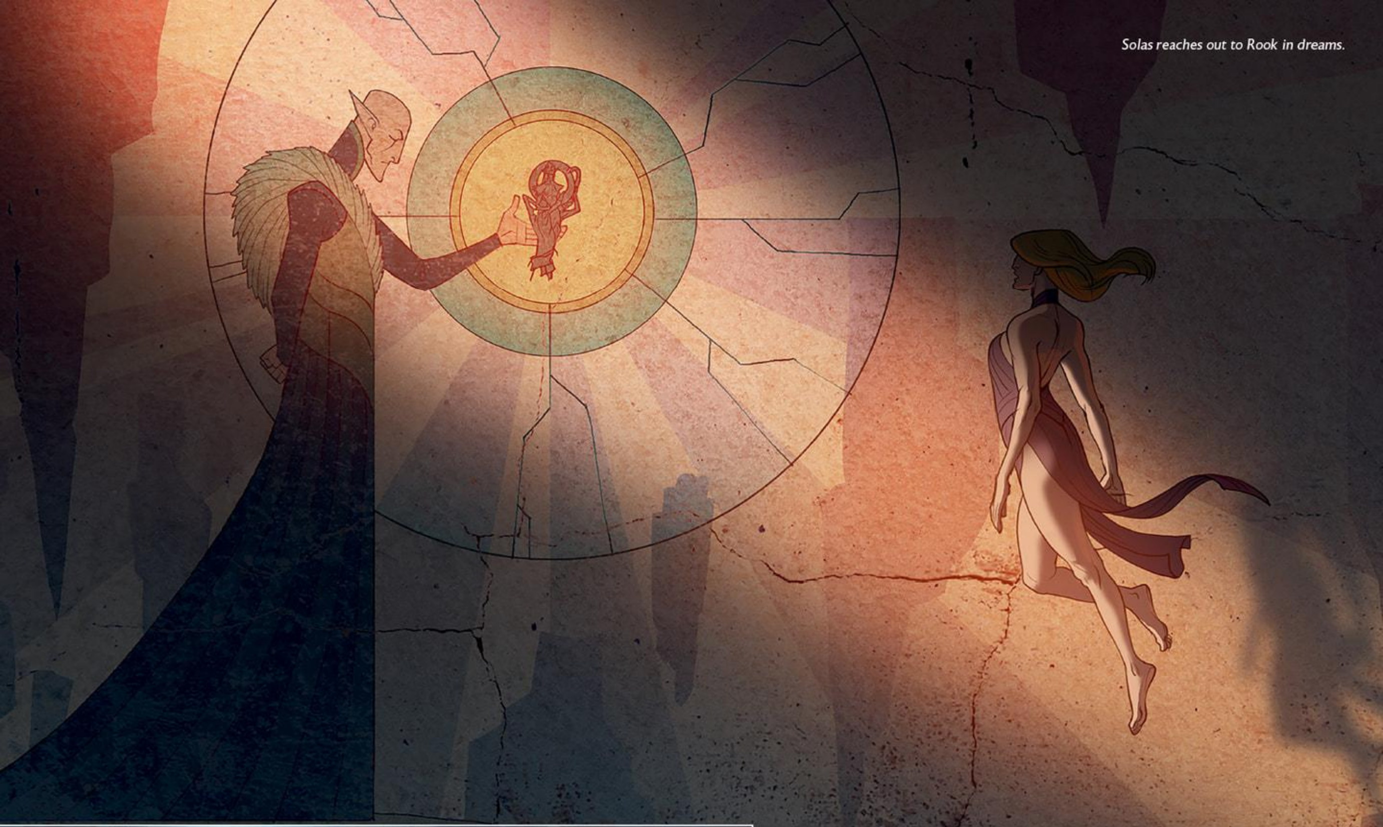




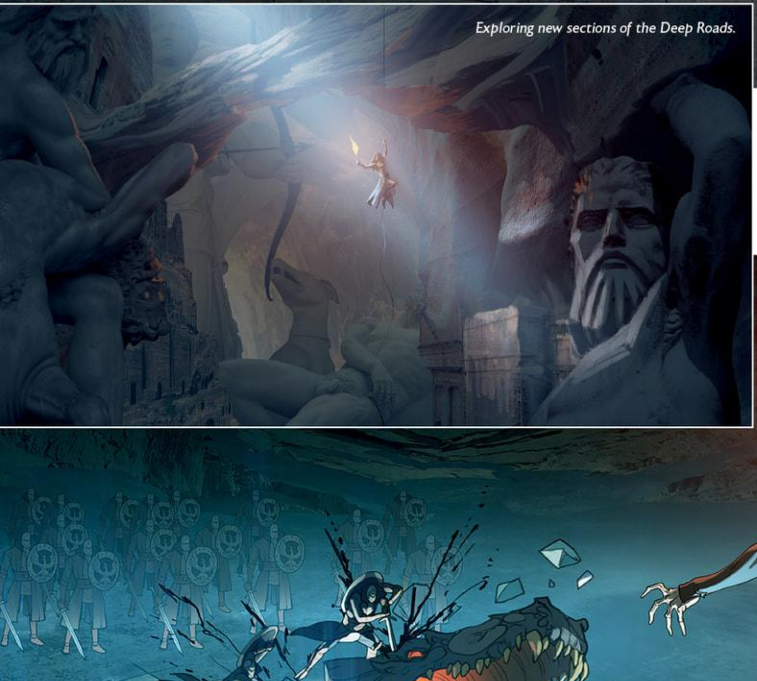
These quick sketches are often used to approve new ideas as fast as possible. In this case, exploring a "hidden in plain sight" meeting place in a Thedas nightclub.



Icons from the interactive storyboard, where you could decide whether your Inquisitor had disbanded or preserved the Inquisition, and whether they stood opposed to Solas or not.

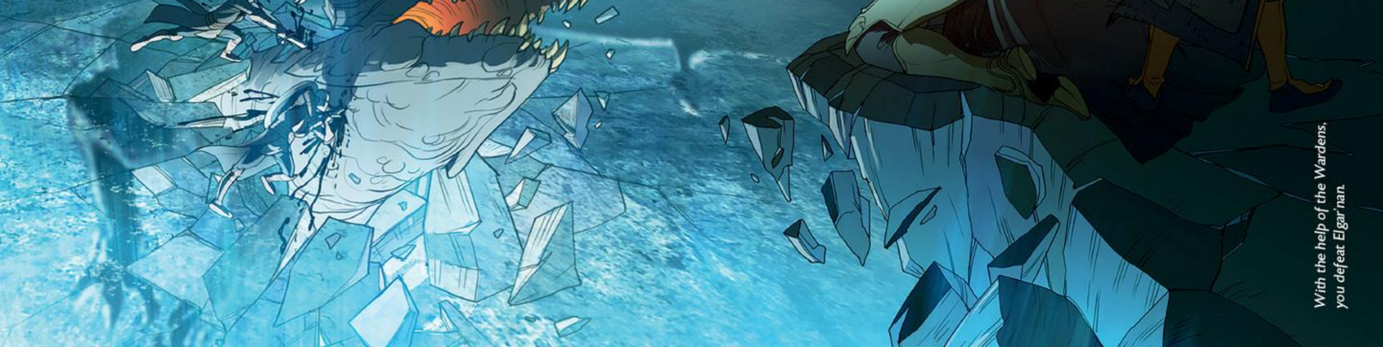


Solas reaches out to Rook in dreams.

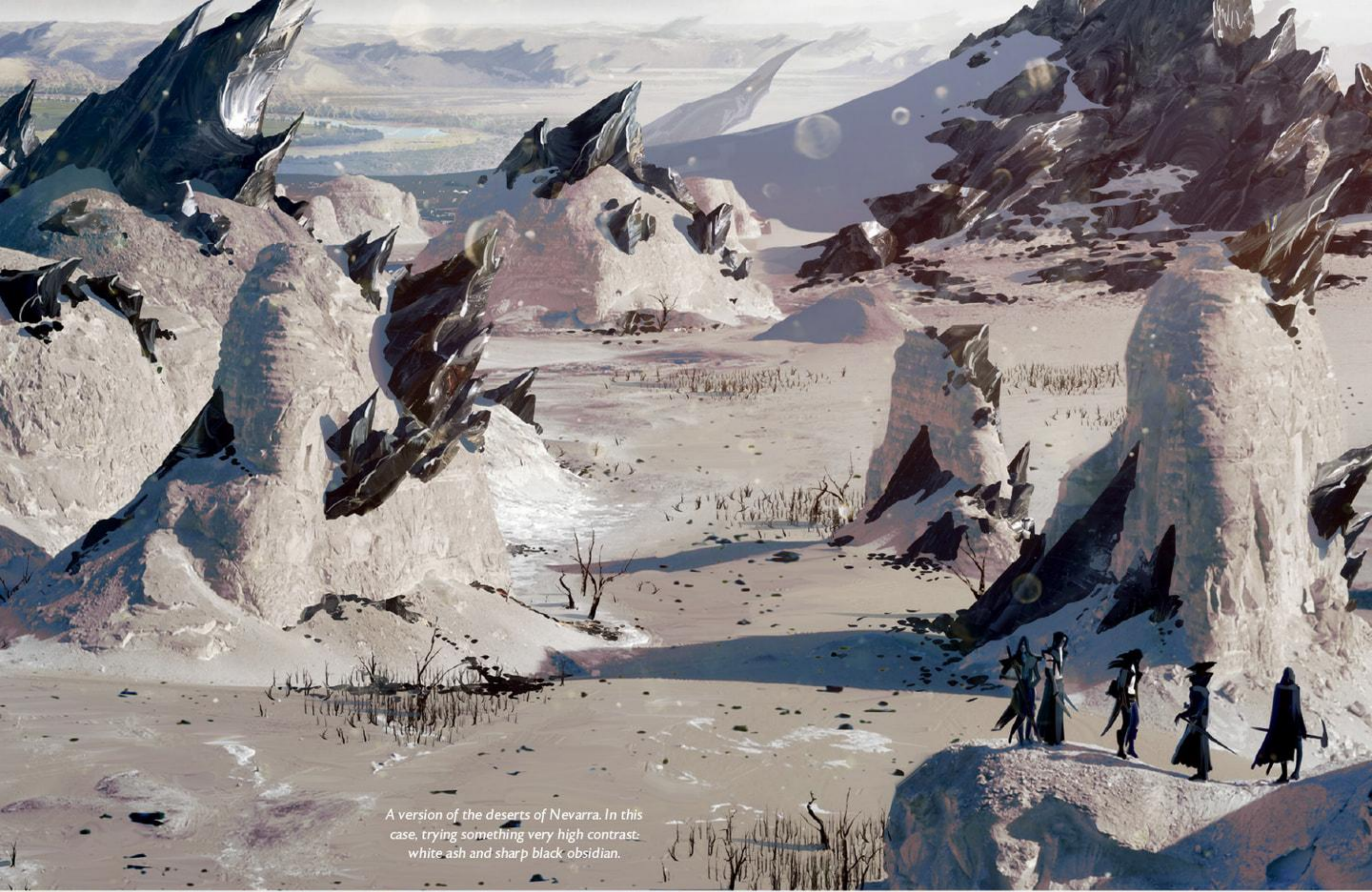


Exploring new sections of the Deep Roads.

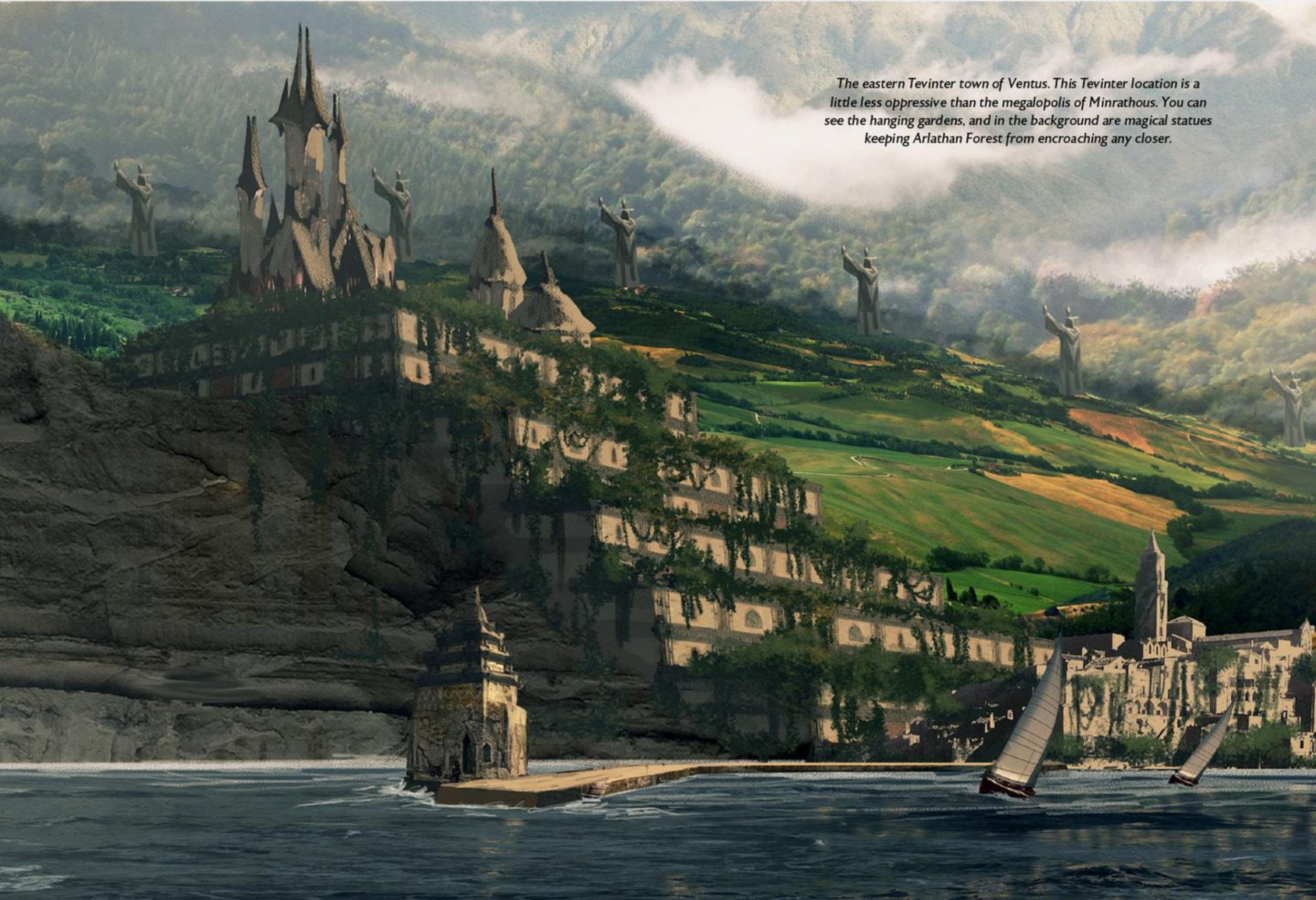
After a round of feedback, the story was revised. For the next batch of drawings, we added more polish. This helped us design the game before designing the game. At this stage, we weren't too precious about anything, so we could make visual design decisions quickly, purely to tell the story. Many designs made during this stage remained largely intact.



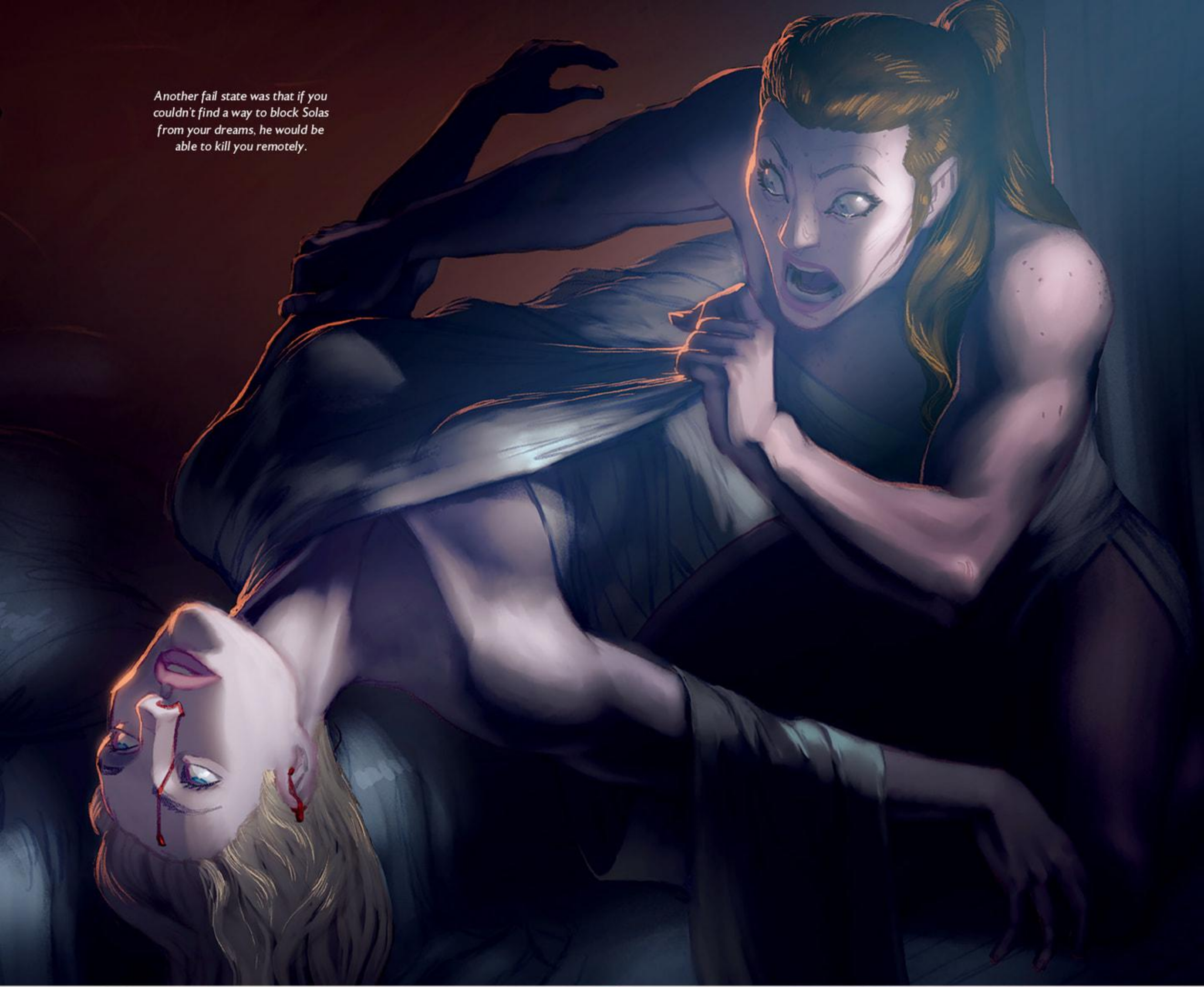
With the help of the Wardens, you defeat Elgar'nan.



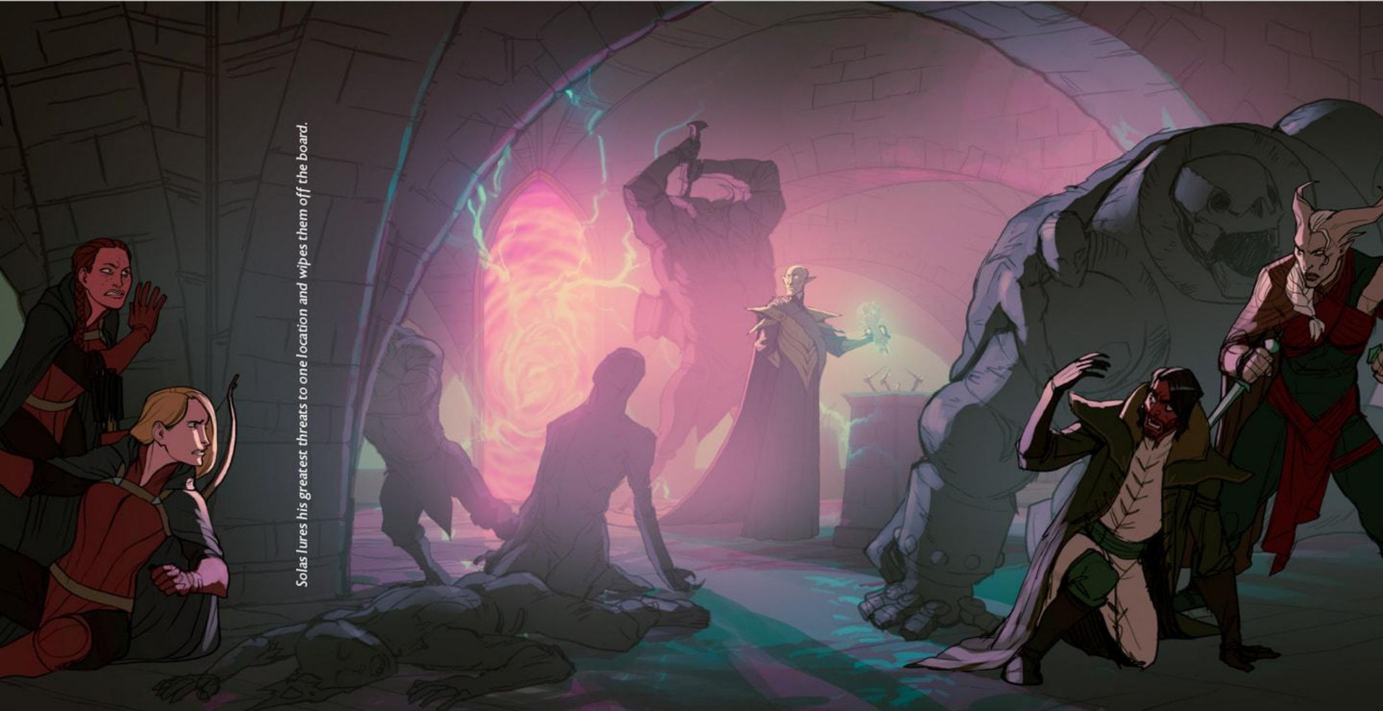
A version of the deserts of Nevarra. In this case, trying something very high contrast: white ash and sharp black obsidian.



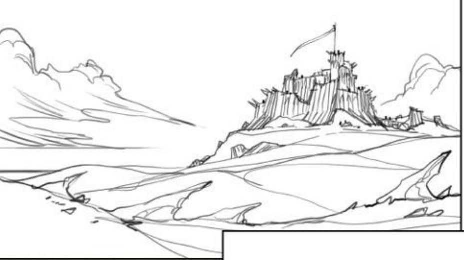
The eastern Tevinter town of Ventus. This Tevinter location is a little less oppressive than the megalopolis of Minrathous. You can see the hanging gardens, and in the background are magical statues keeping Arlathan Forest from encroaching any closer.

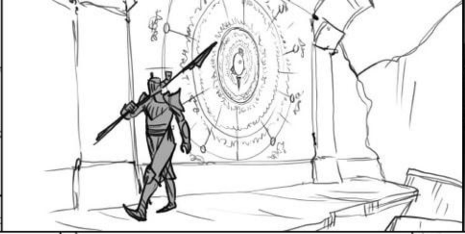


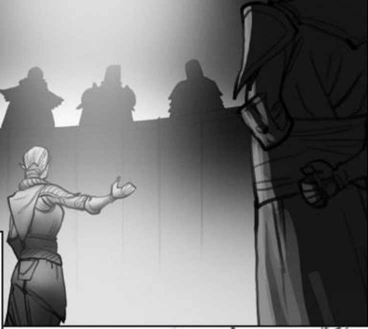
Another fail state was that if you couldn't find a way to block Solas from your dreams, he would be able to kill you remotely.



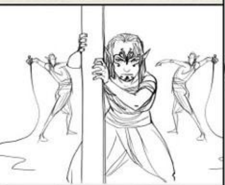
Solas lures his greatest threats to one location and wipes them off the board.

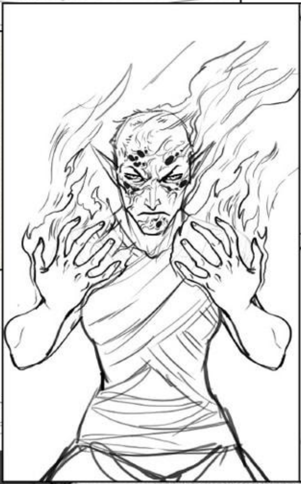


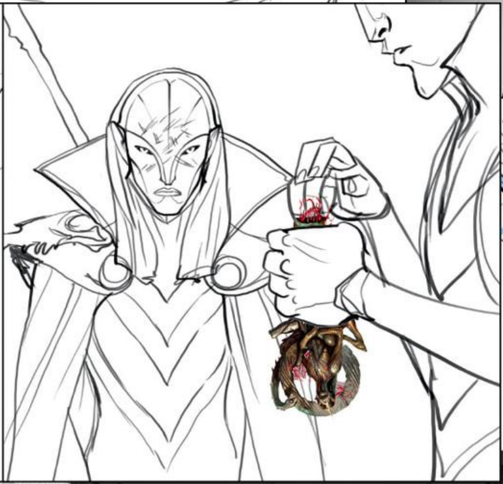


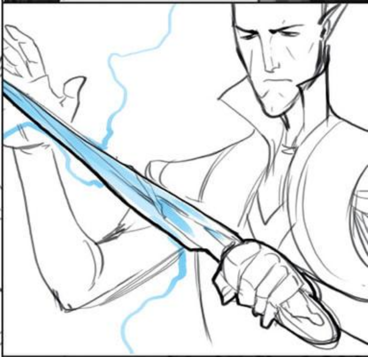


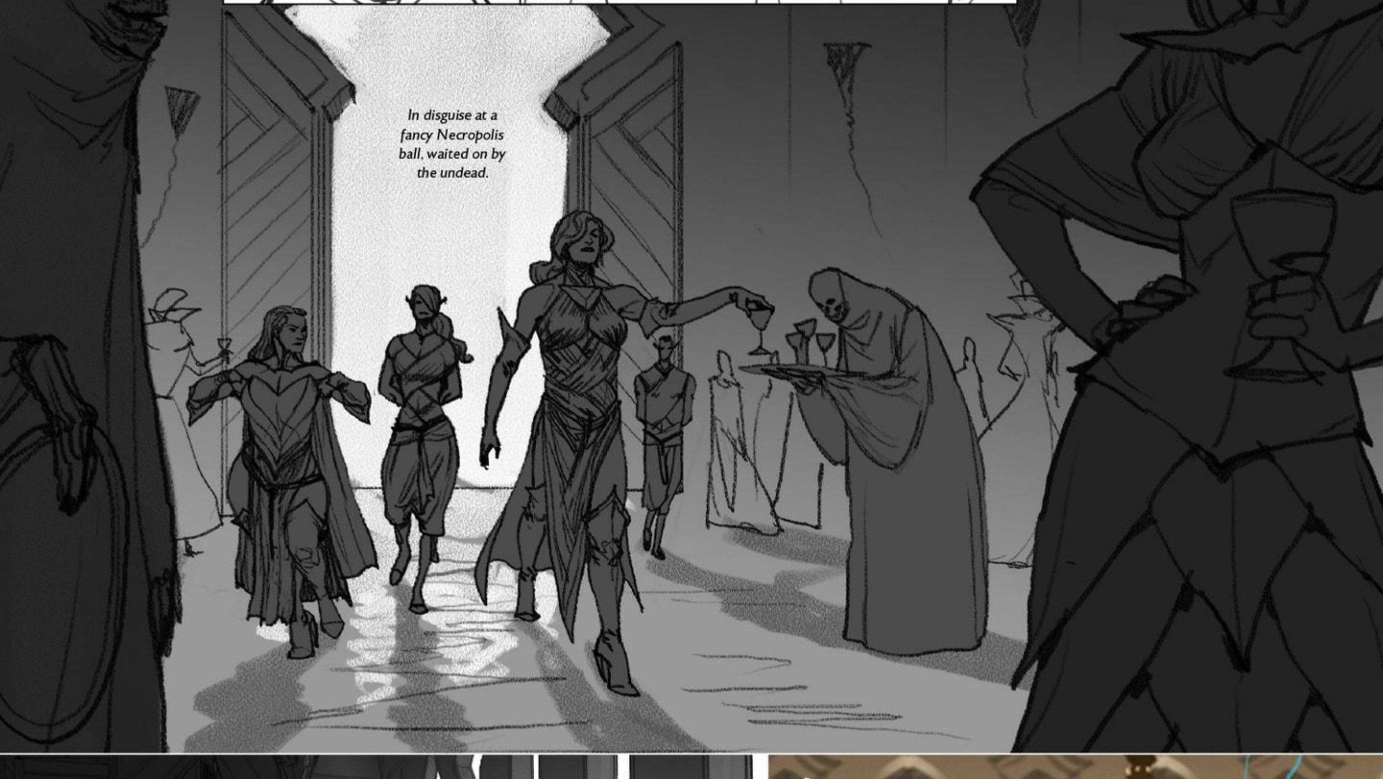
Some visual backstory for Solas's cut "bad cop" right hand, Reva.



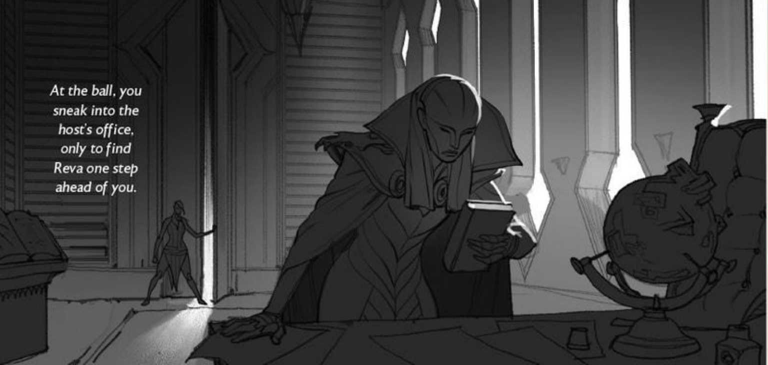




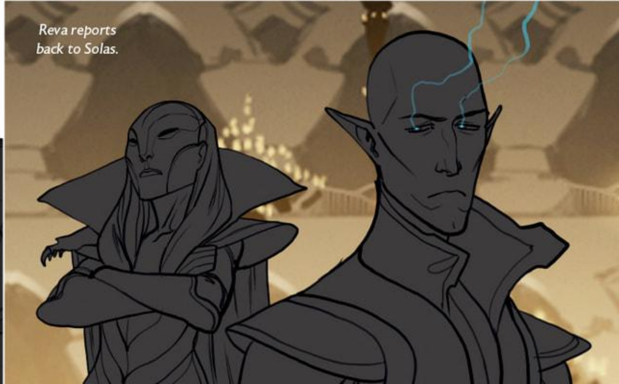




In disguise at a fancy Necropolis ball, waited on by the undead.

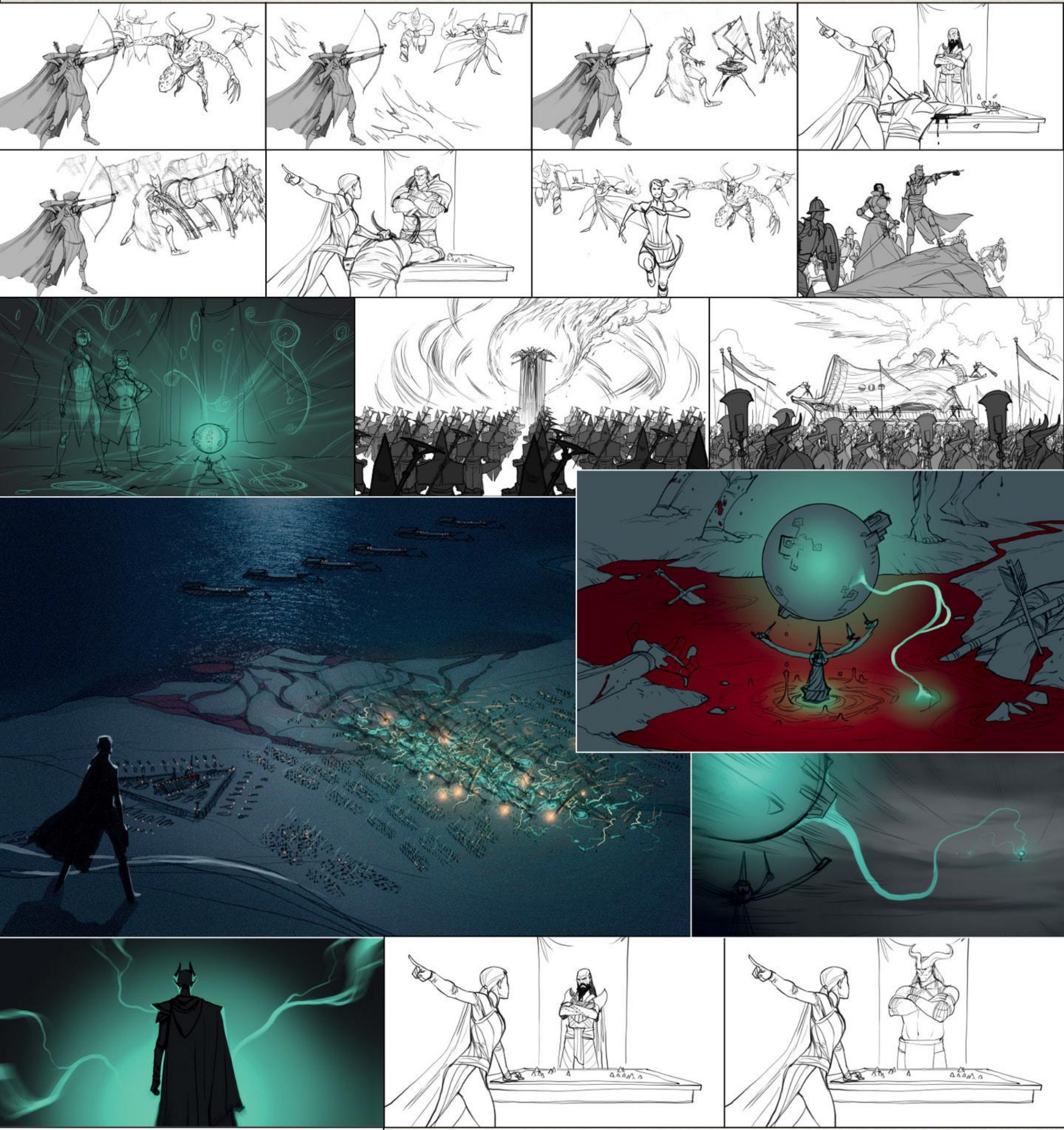


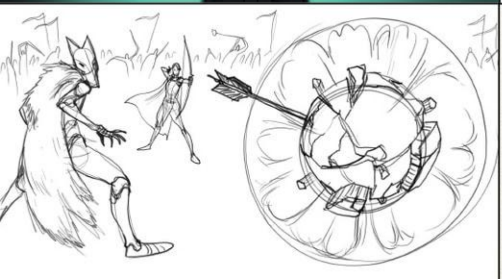
At the ball, you sneak into the host's office, only to find Reva one step ahead of you.



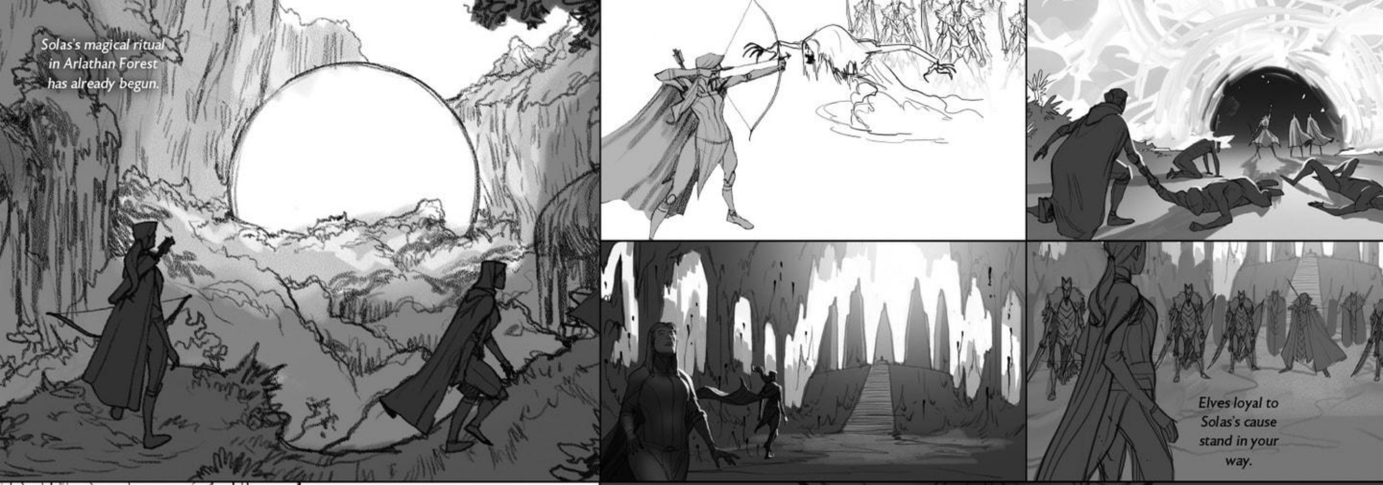
Reva reports back to Solas.

In one draft of the story, Solas manipulated Tevinter and the Antaam into open war, with the goal of performing the biggest blood-magic spell since the creation of the Veil.



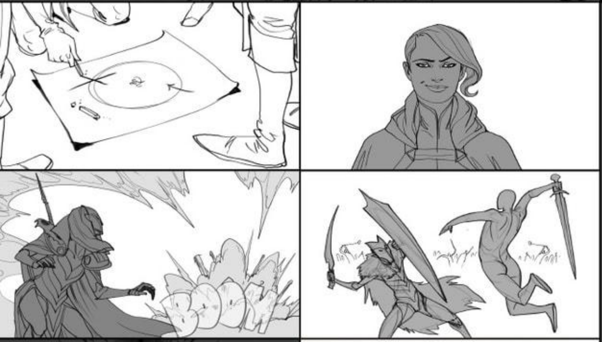


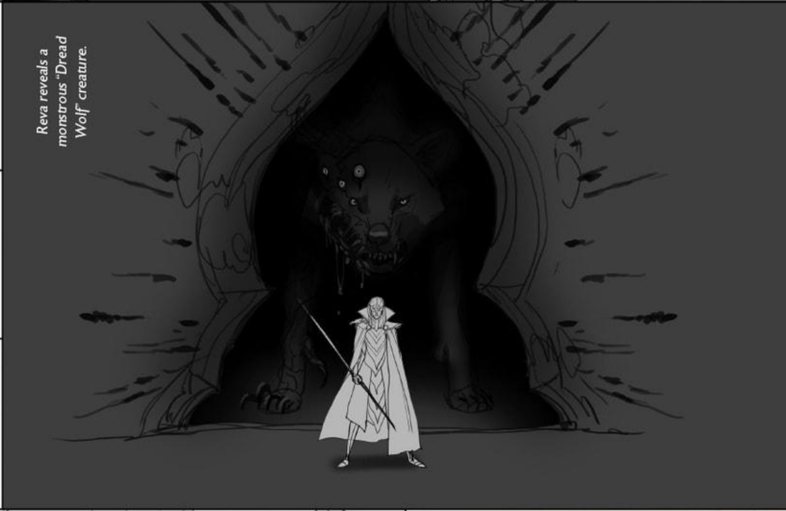
Rook would have to covertly approach both sides of the conflict to plead for peace. Should Rook fail at diplomacy, Solas also planted magic-collecting orbs around the battlefield. Sabotaging them would be Rook's last option.



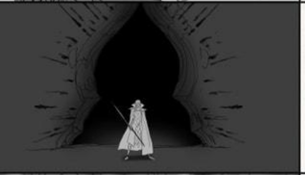
Solas's magical ritual in Arlathan Forest has already begun.

Elves loyal to Solas's cause stand in your way.

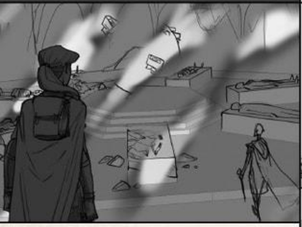




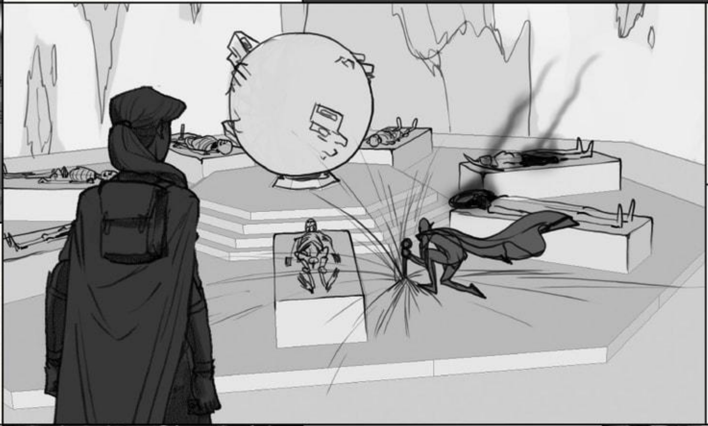
Reva reveals a monstrous "Dread Wolf" creature.



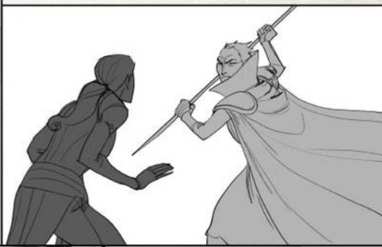
You finally reach Solas, just as he plunges his lyrium dagger into the Veil.

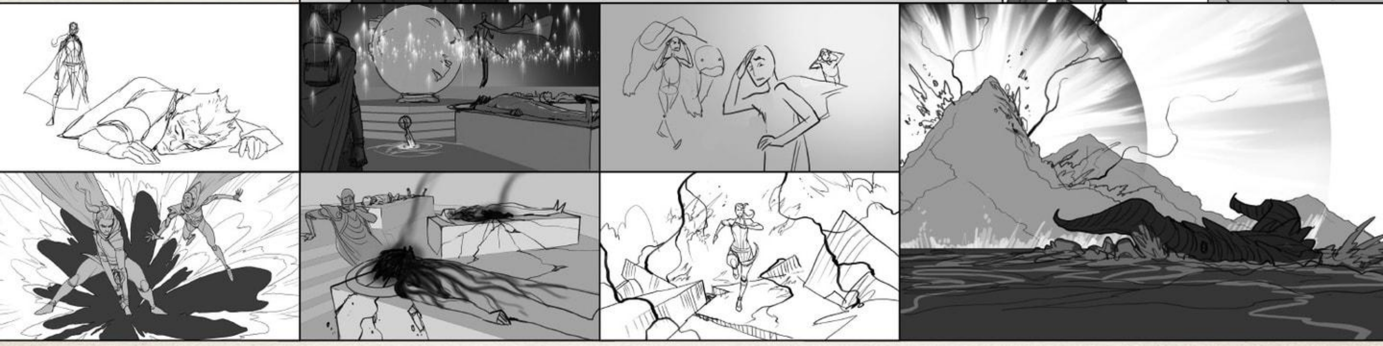


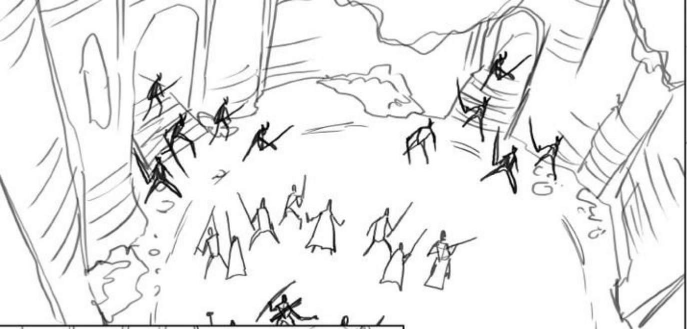
Solas is stopped, but you begin to learn that you've unleashed something far worse.

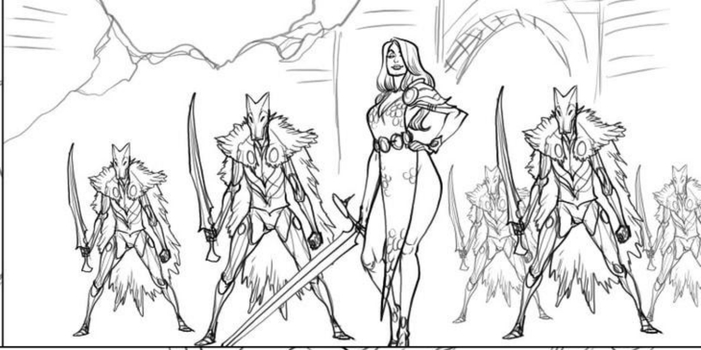


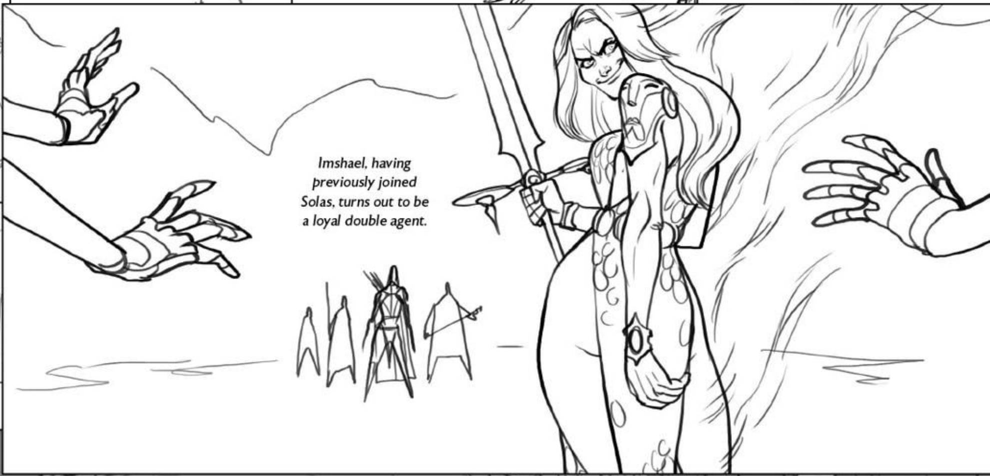
The biggest advantage to working like this is turnaround time. You can show someone a drawing and say, "Like this?" and then quickly revise it.



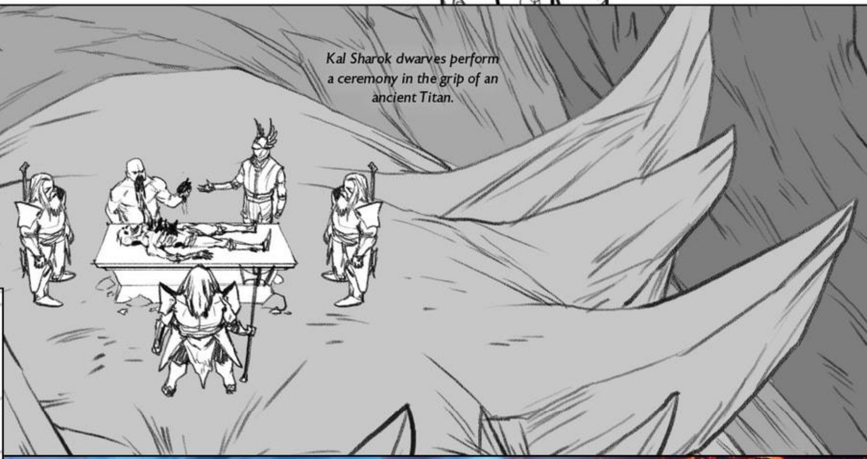




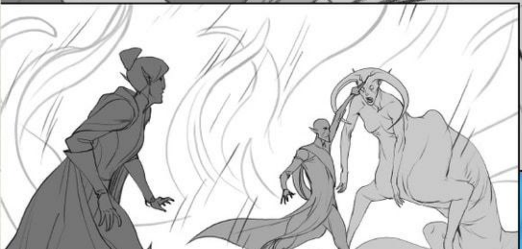


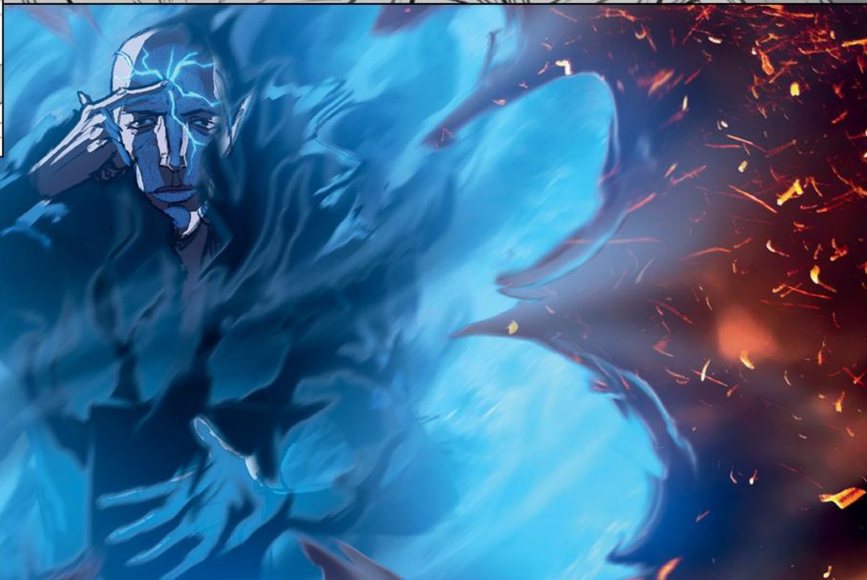


Imshael, having previously joined Solas, turns out to be a loyal double agent.

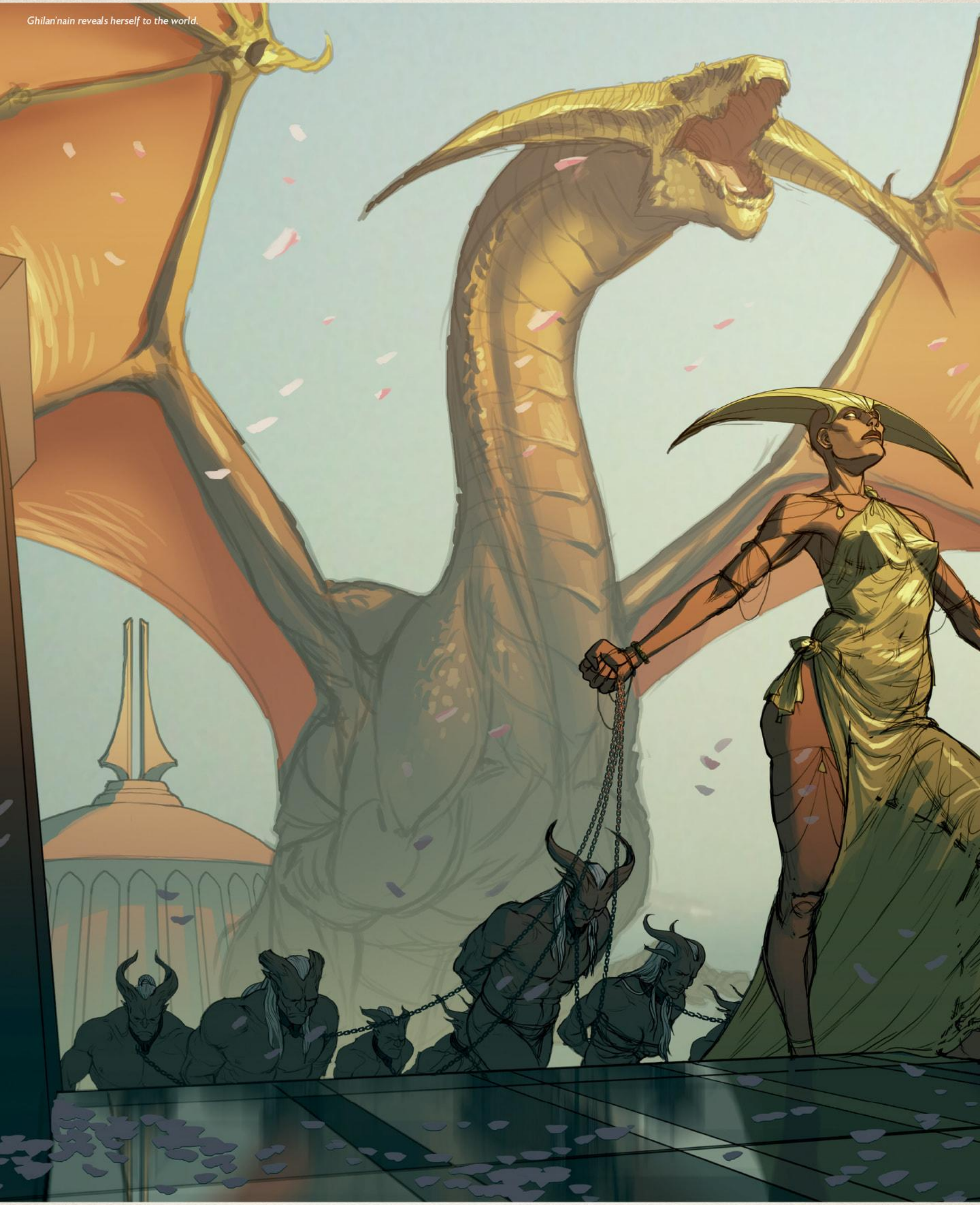


Kal Sharok dwarves perform a ceremony in the grip of an ancient Titan.

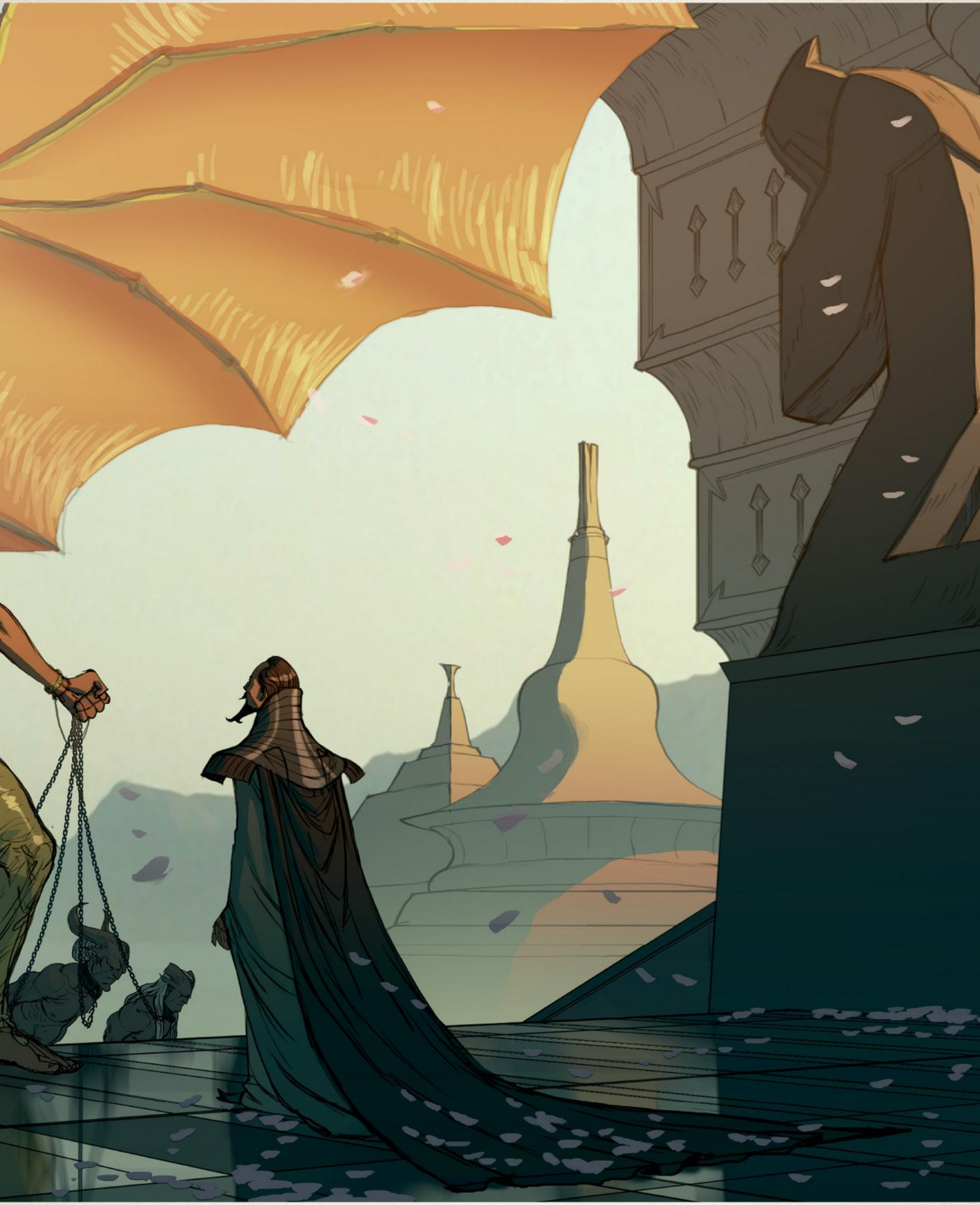


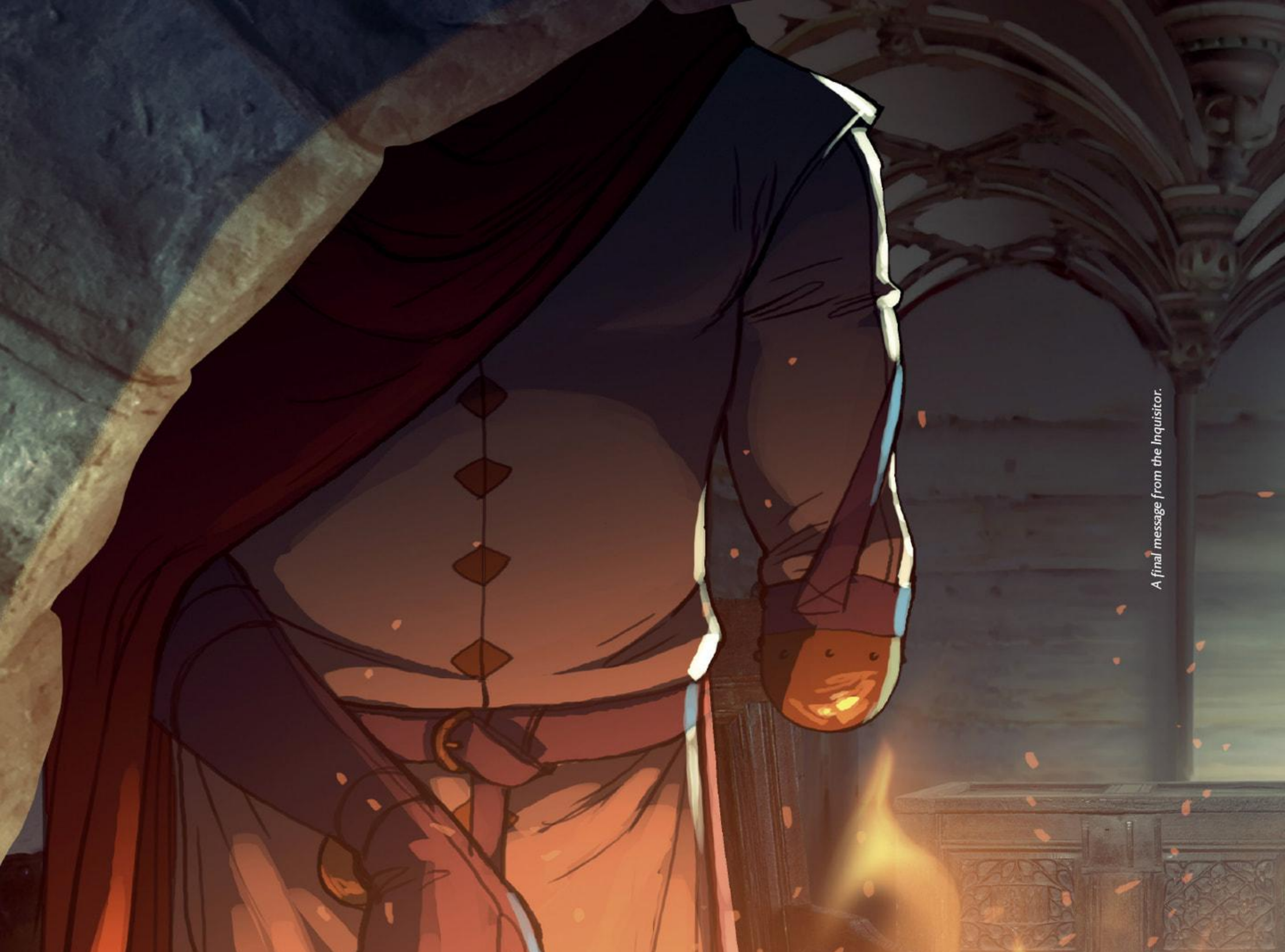


Solas tranquilizes Ghilan'nain (above) and, as his last act, performs the same procedure on himself.

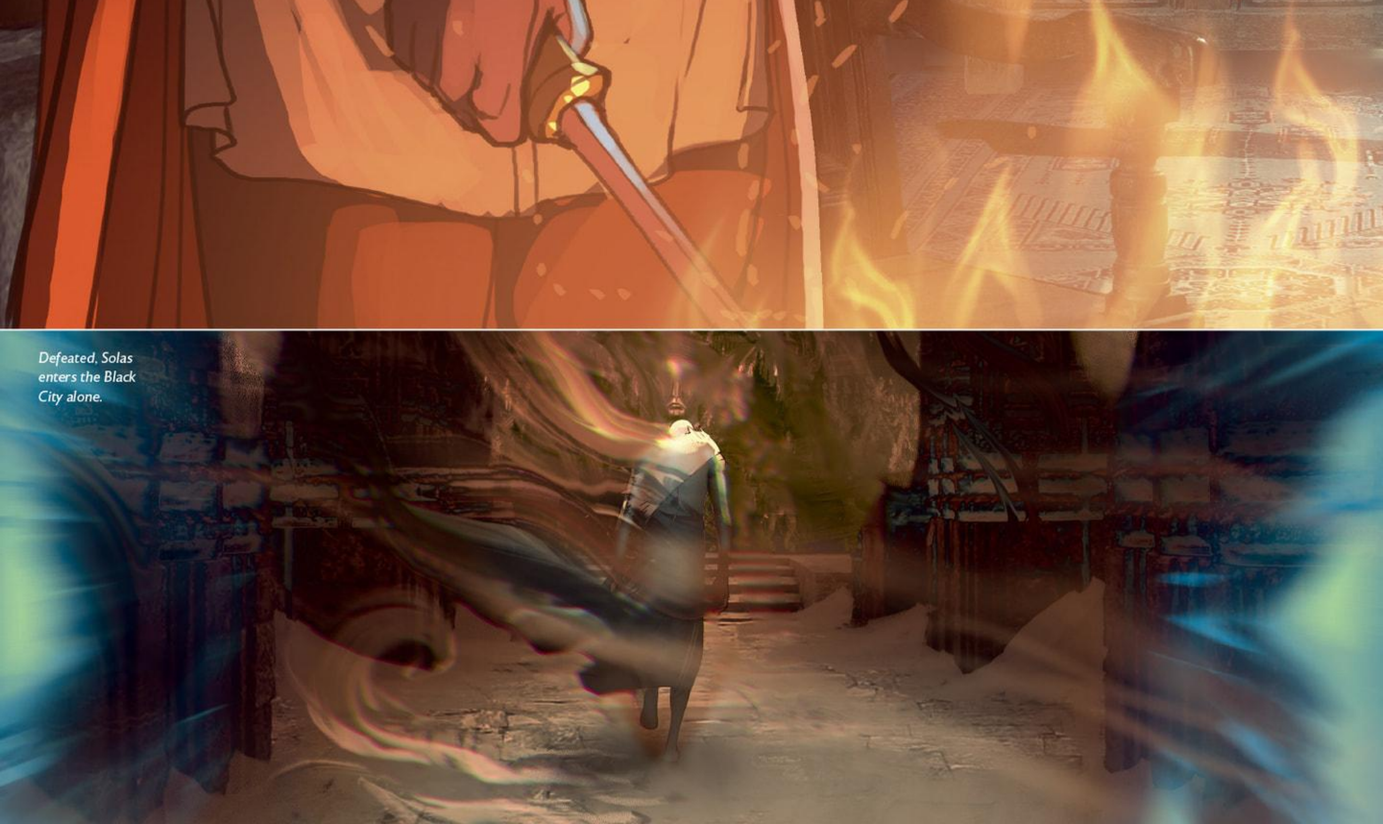


Ghilan'nain reveals herself to the world.

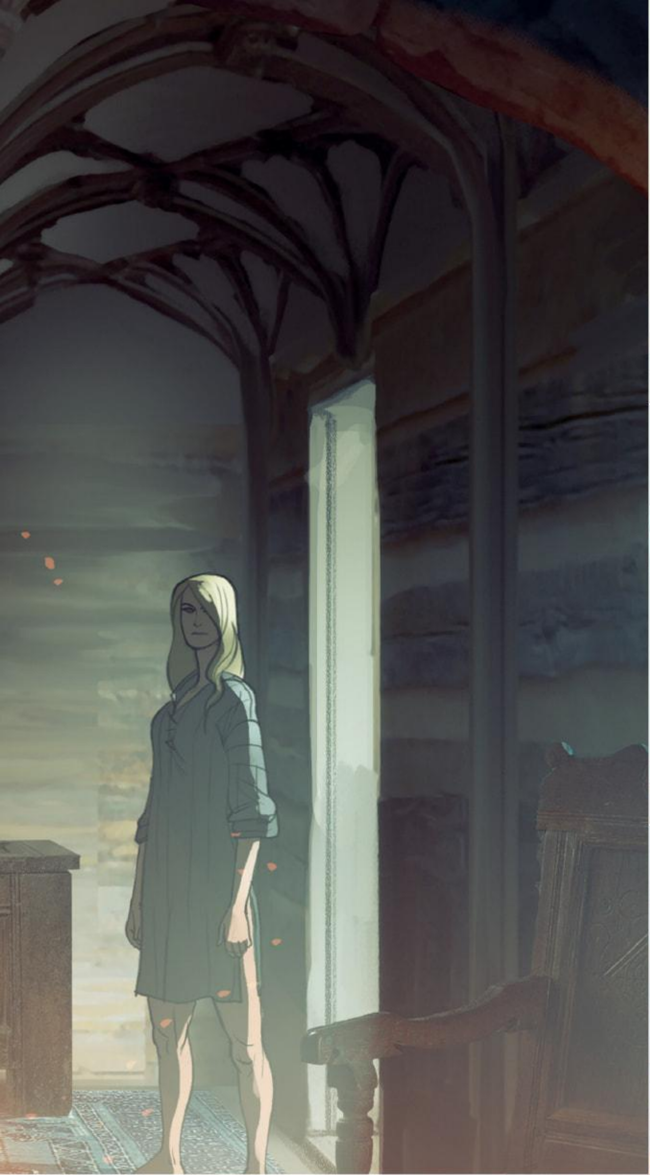


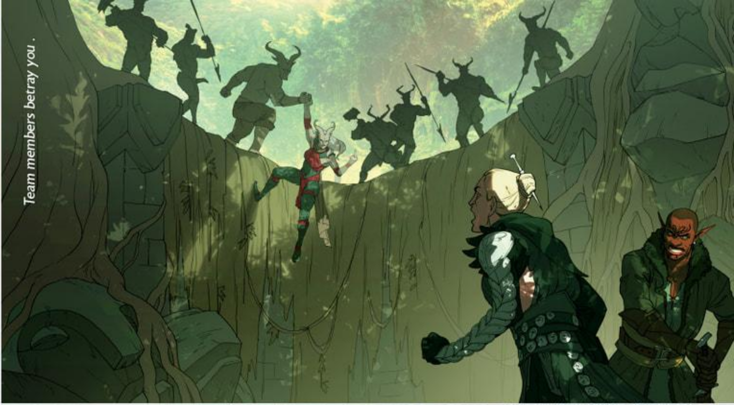


A final message from the Inquisitor.

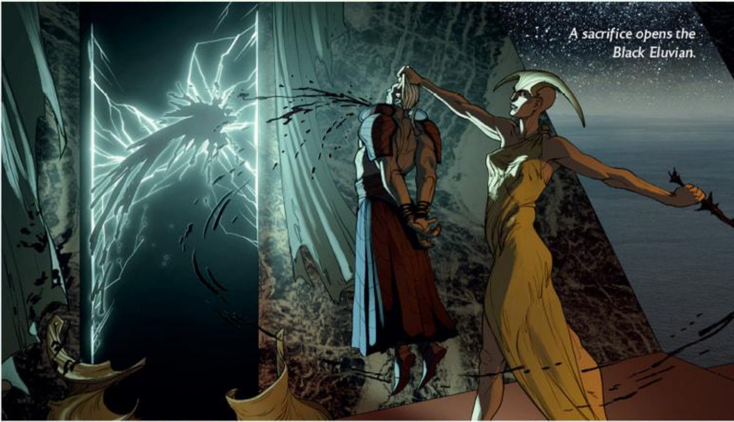


Defeated, Solas enters the Black City alone.

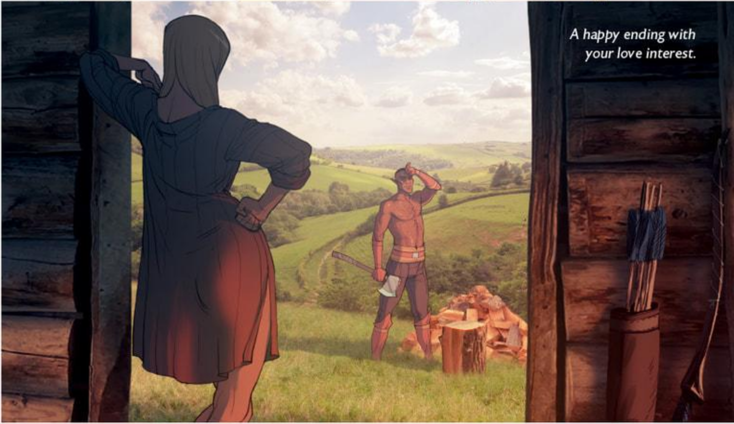




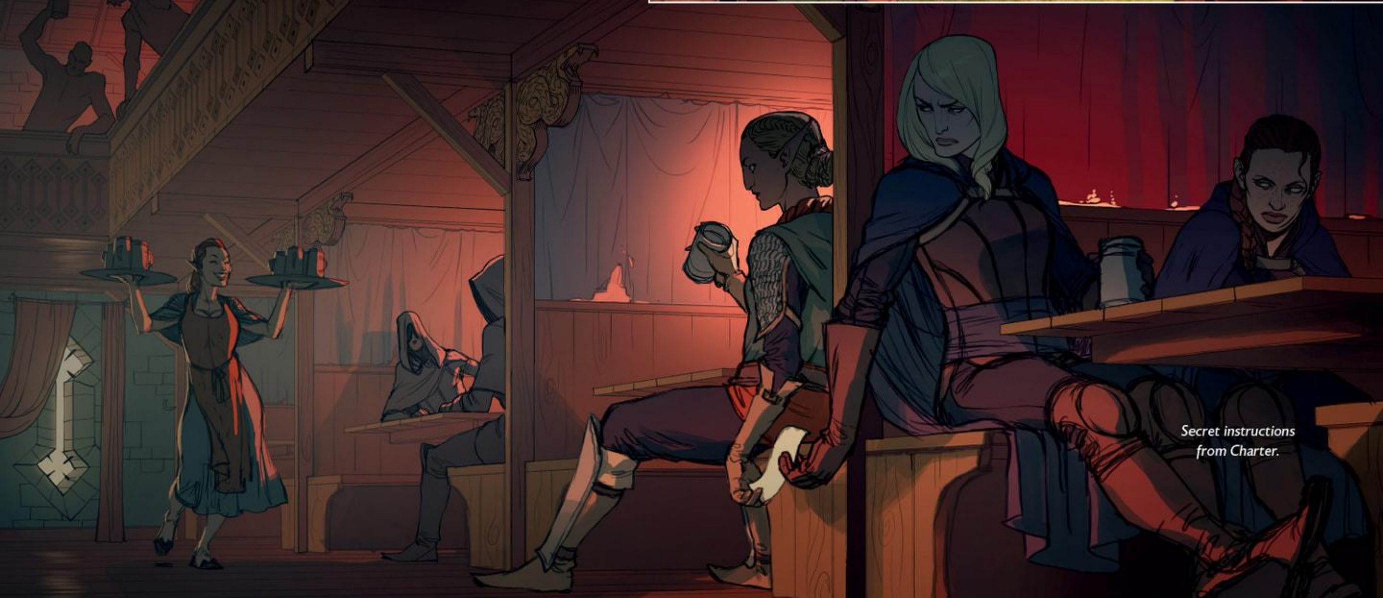
Team members betray you .



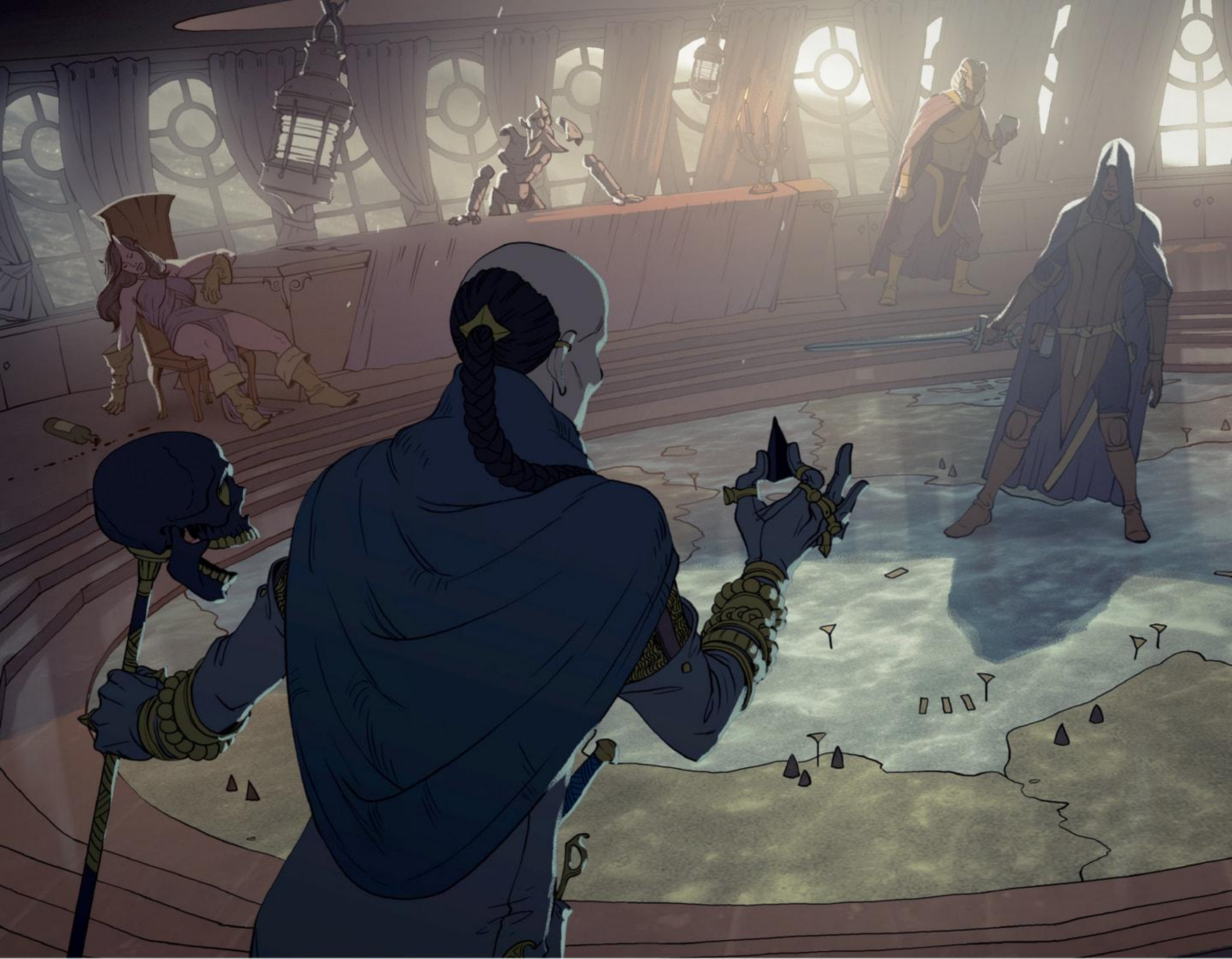
A sacrifice opens the Black Eluvian.

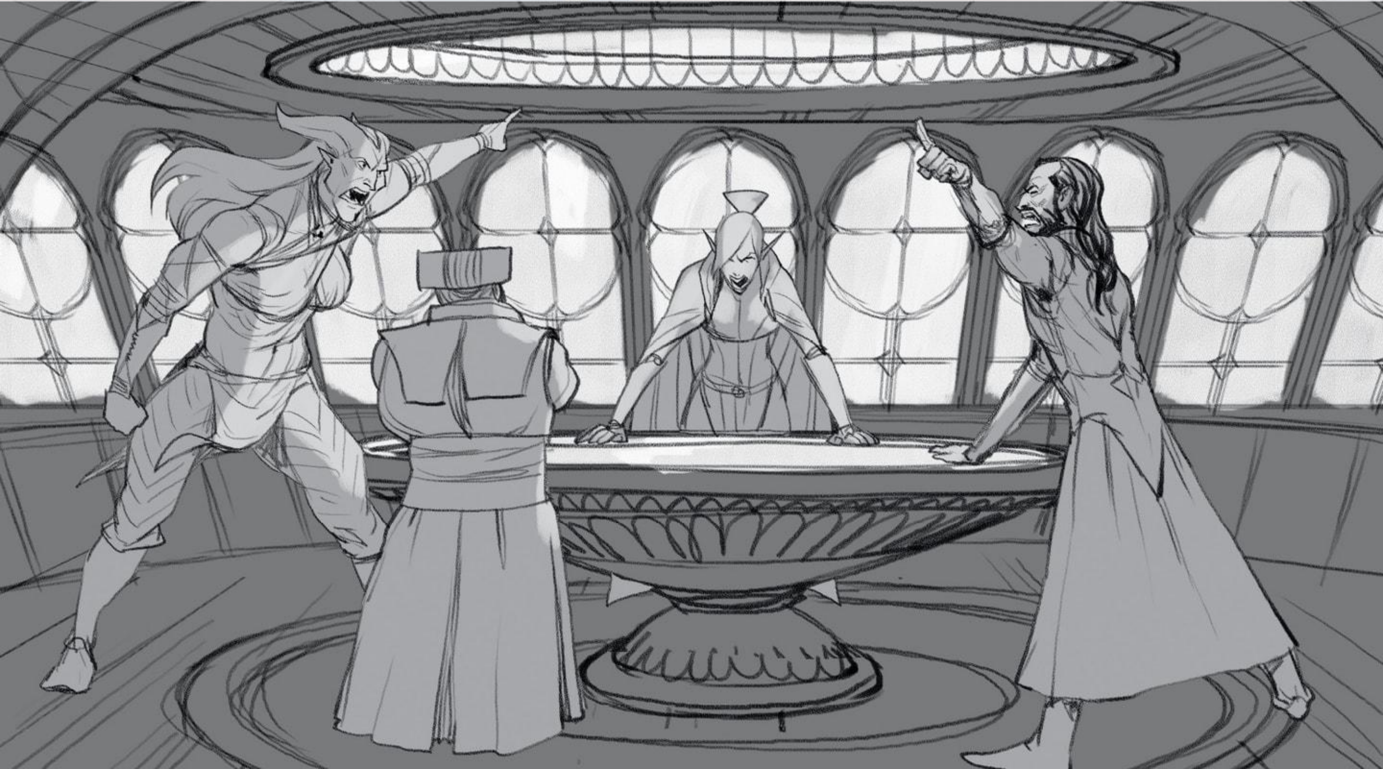


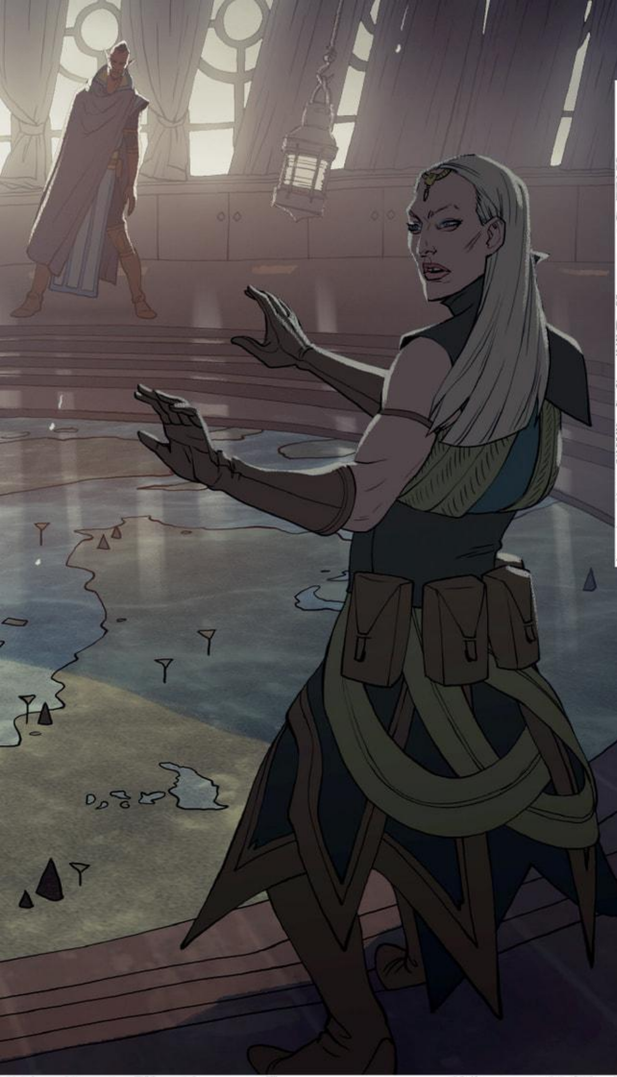
A happy ending with your love interest.

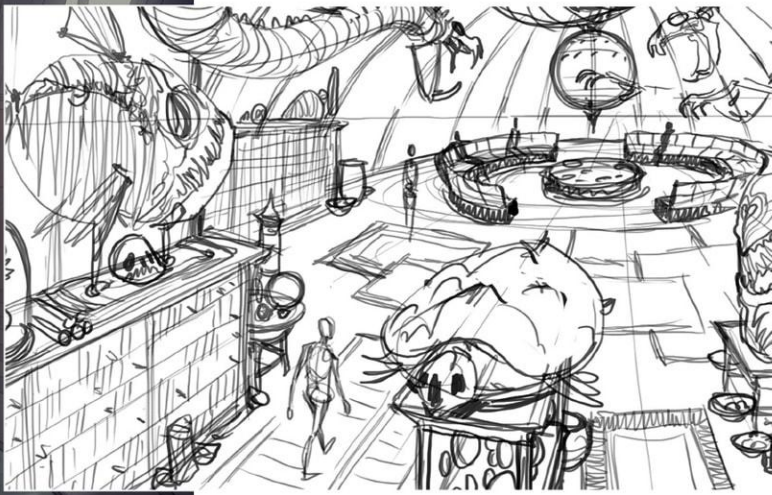


Secret instructions from Charter.

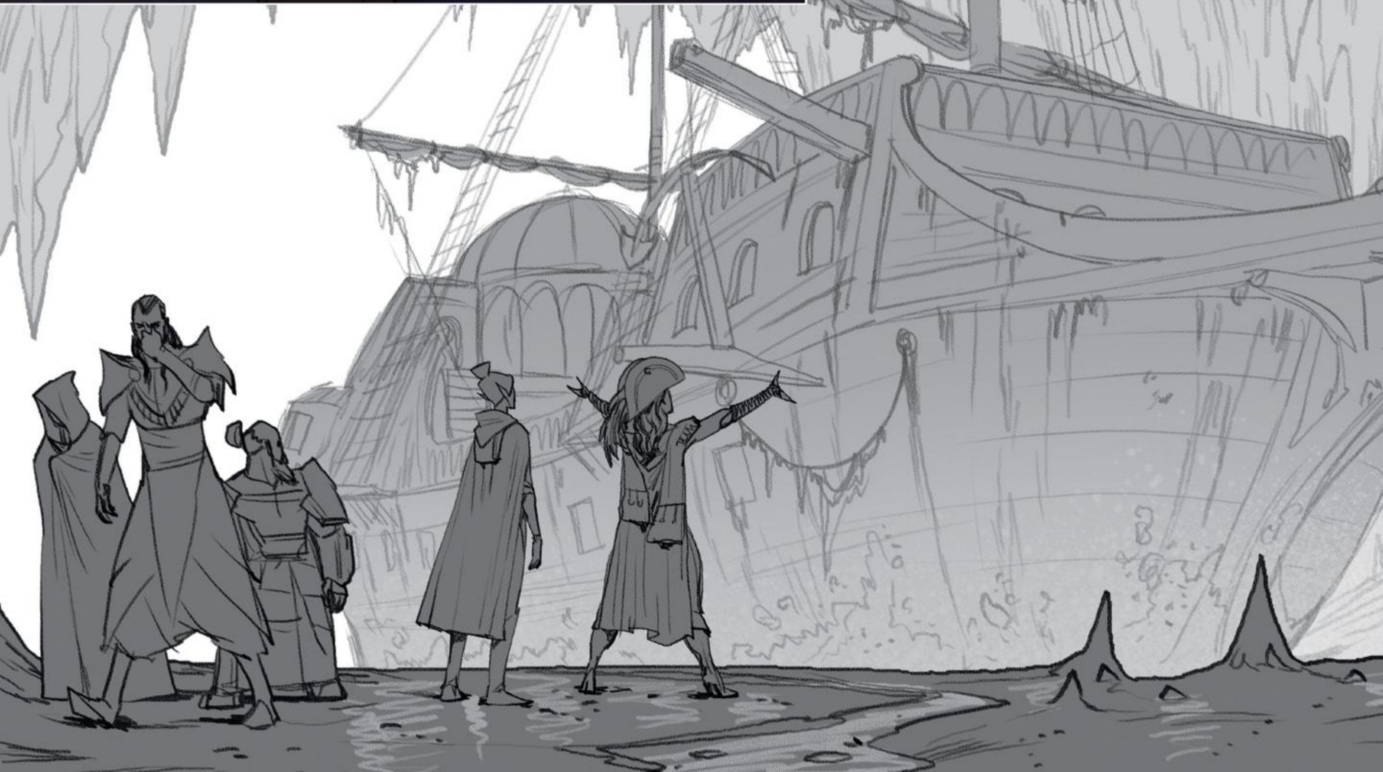


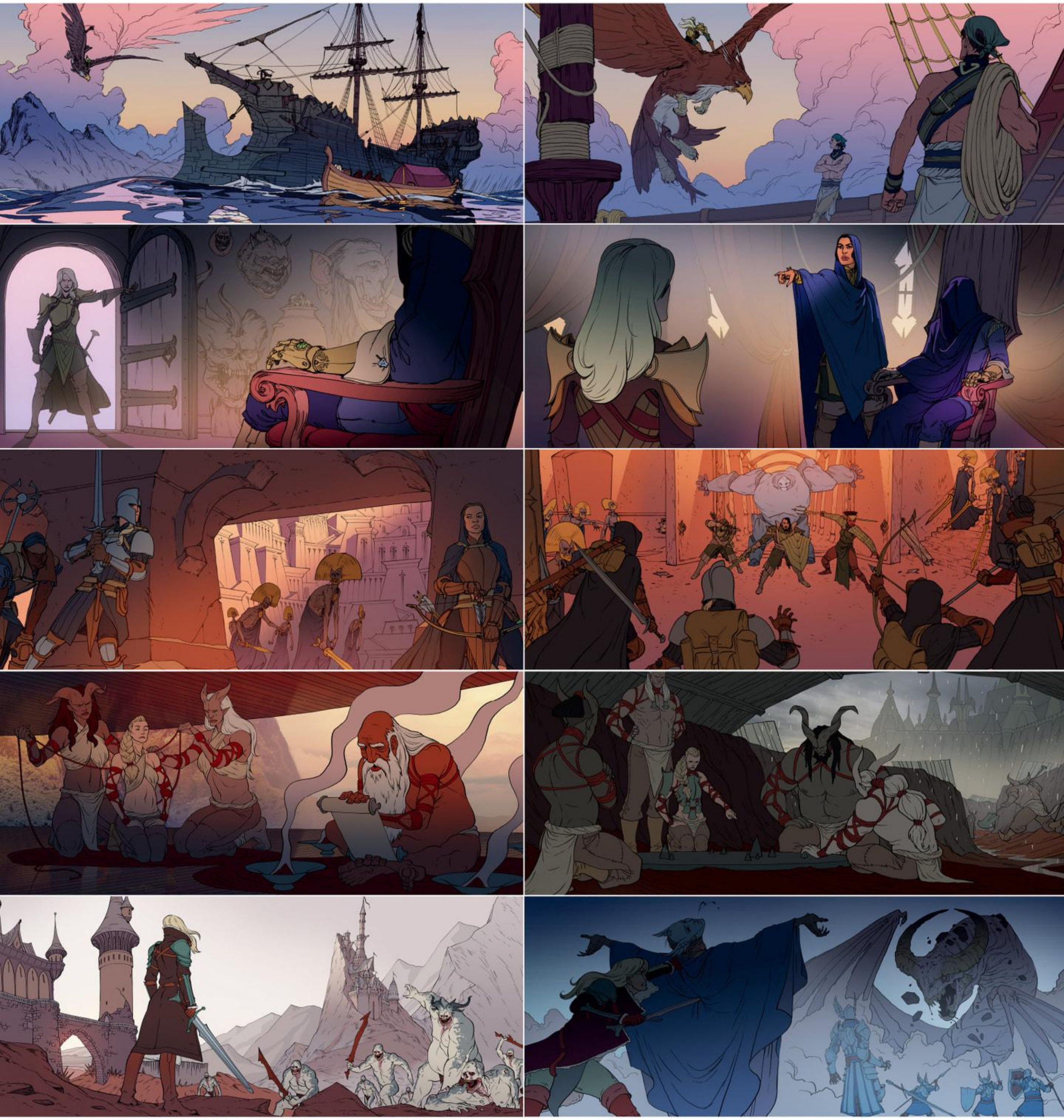






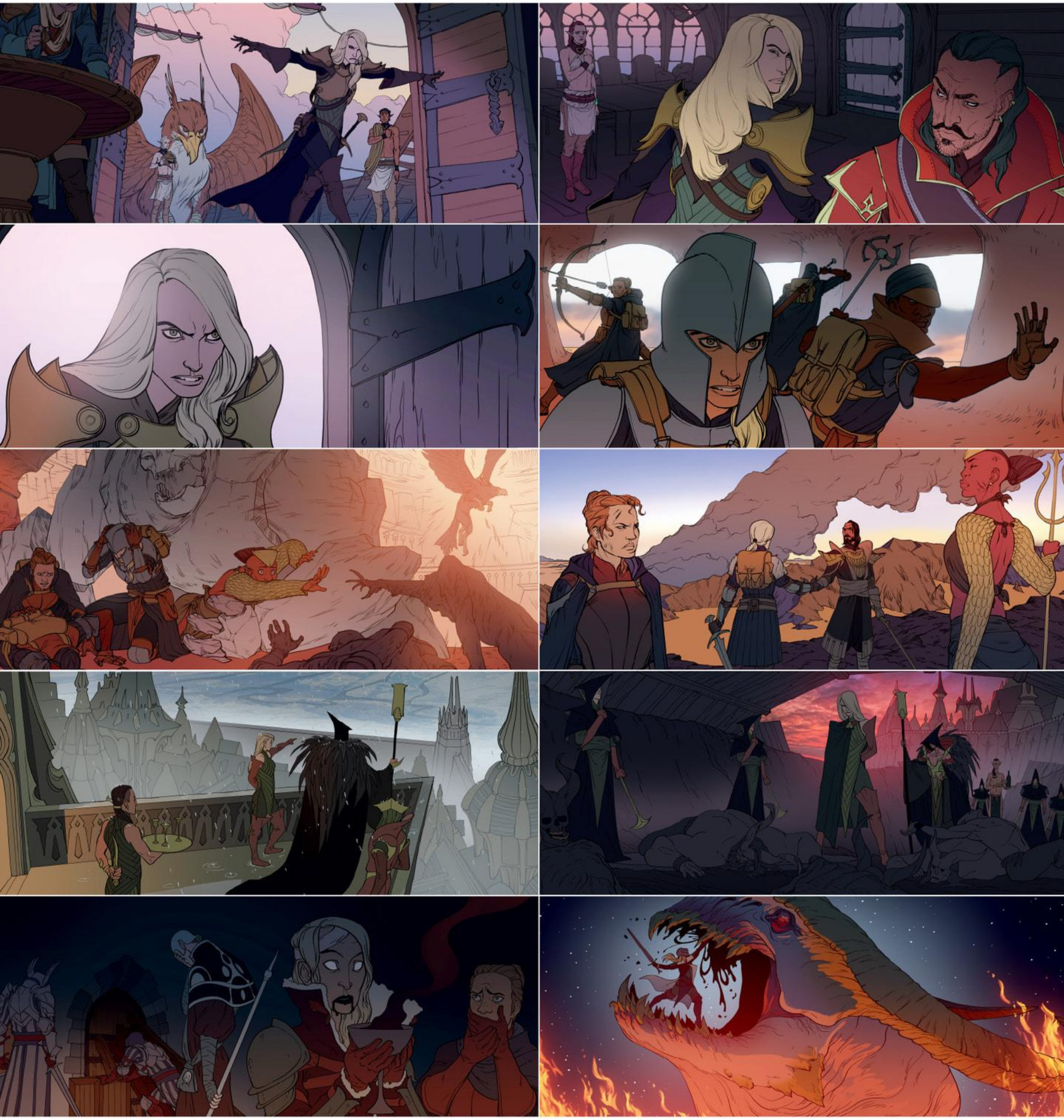
The ship was a great backdrop for the interpersonal conflict of the team. We enjoyed thinking about how to make it unique, like including the collection of curiosities seen above. We also liked including the idea that Isabela procured it for you, but as a fixer-upper. Nothing like a scrappy but lovable ship to call home.

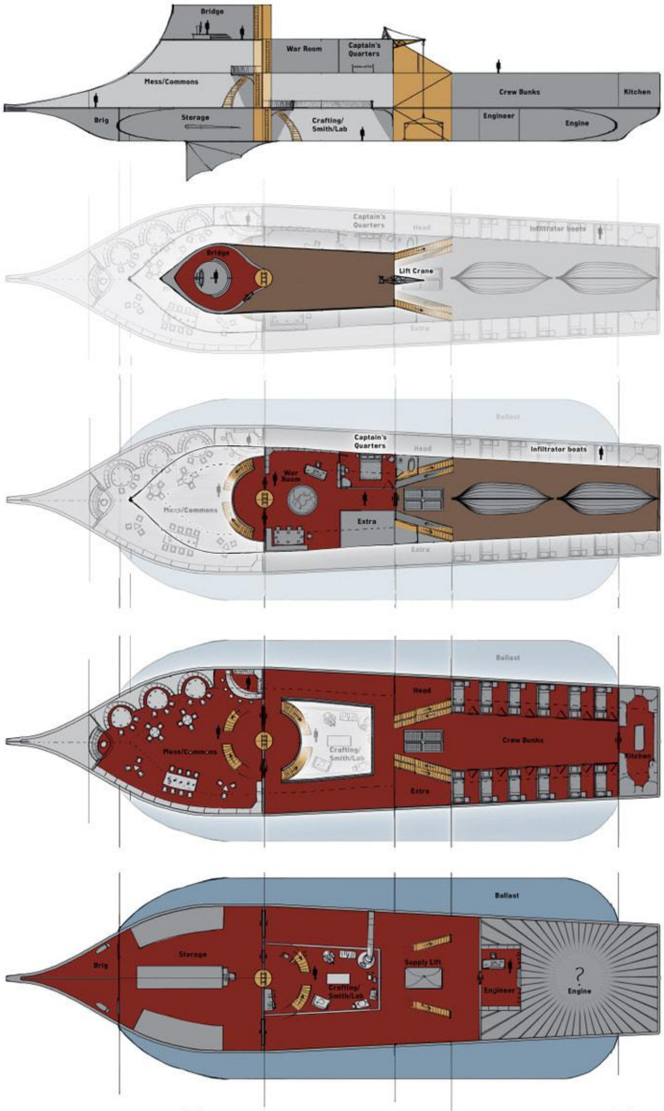




This sequential series was another way to explore the story structure that was solidifying.

It relates the story of Rook, who returns to her ship to find the Inquisitor waiting and expecting a report. Rook tells of the Necropolis mission being interrupted by Solas. Making uneasy alliances. Going undercover with the Qunari, rising in the ranks, and then betraying them to Tevinter. Finally heading to Weisshaupt, stopping the Wardens from making a huge mistake, and ultimately joining them and slaying an Archdemon.




Bridge
War Room
Captain's Quarters
Mess/Commons
Crew Bunks
Kitchen
Brig
Storage
Crafting/Smith/Lab
Engineer
Engine
Captain's Quarters
Head
Infiltrator boats
Bridge
Lift Crane
Extra
Ballast
Captain's Quarters
Head
Infiltrator boats
War Room
Mess/Commons
Extra
Extra
Ballast
Head
Mess/Commons
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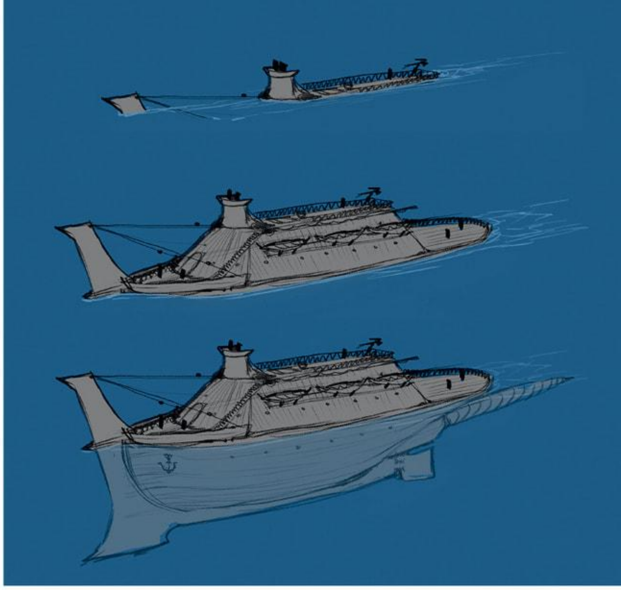
Kitchen
Extra
Ballast
Brig
Storage
Supply Lift
Crafting/Smith/Lab
Engineer
?
Engine

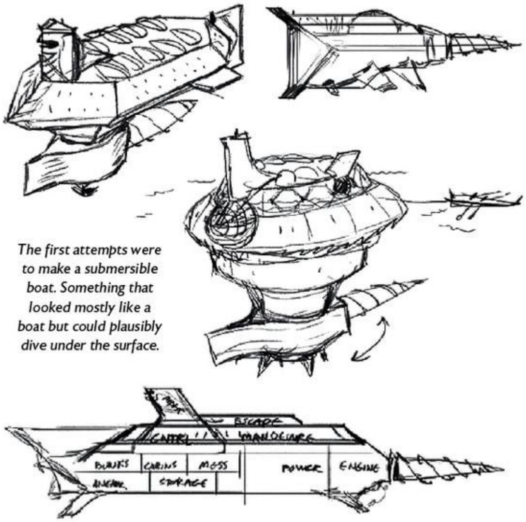


THE *DUMAT*

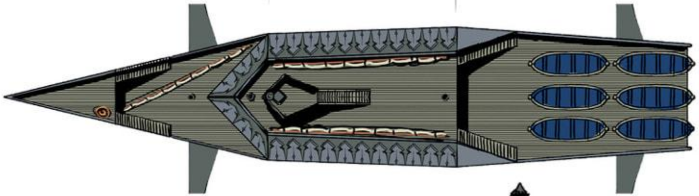
The ship idea was coalescing. The name *Dumat* was pulling ahead (named for the first Archdemon). We were on Frostbite, so we knew we could probably borrow some of that awesome ocean tech from *Battlefield*!

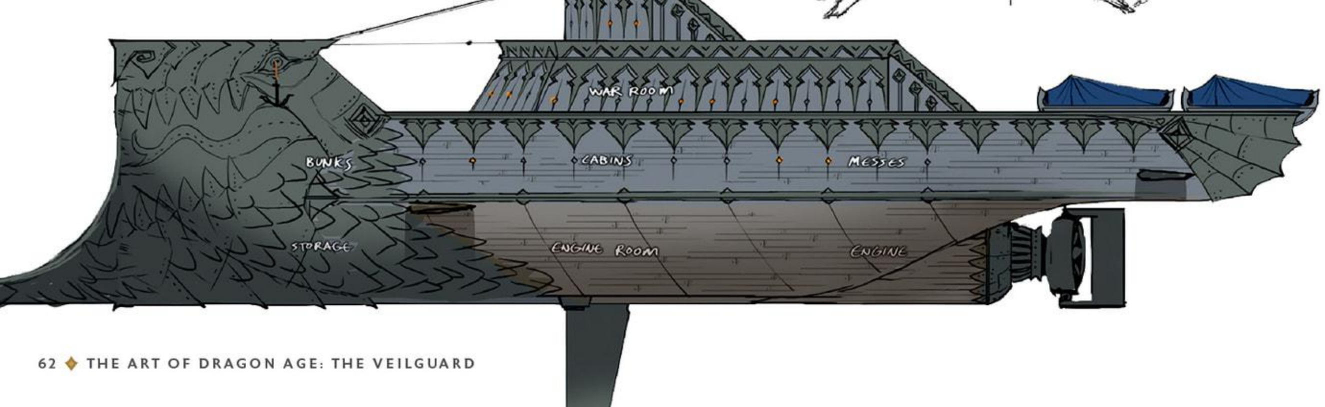
One problem was that thematically, boats didn't quite line up with the spy theme. They're too easy to spot and attack. But you know what's not easy to spot? Submarines. The idea was completely insane . . . so we had to try it.

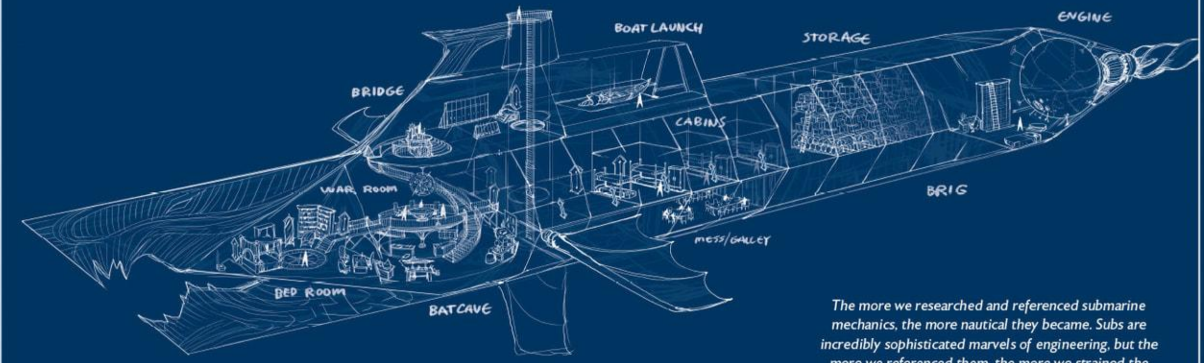
This brought up the challenge of anachronism. Submarines don't fit in fantasy games. Obviously. But what if we found a way?


ESCAPE
MANOEUVRE
CNTRL
BUNKS
CABINS
MESS
POWER
ENGINE
ANCHOR
STORAGE

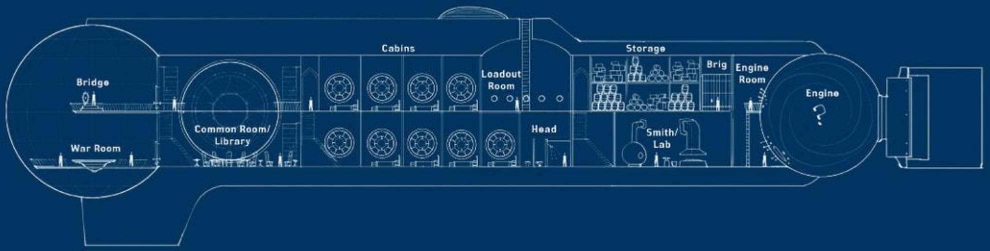
The first attempts were to make a submersible boat. Something that looked mostly like a boat but could plausibly dive under the surface.

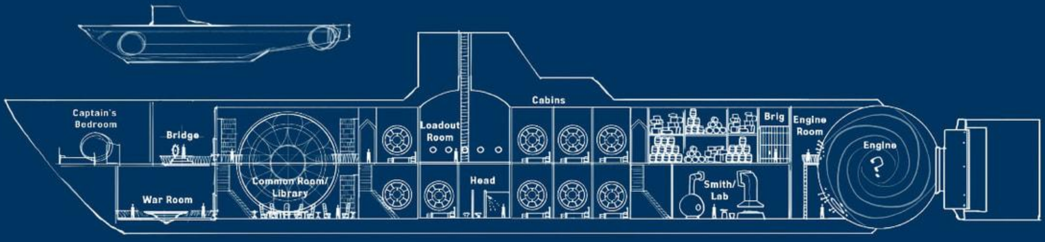


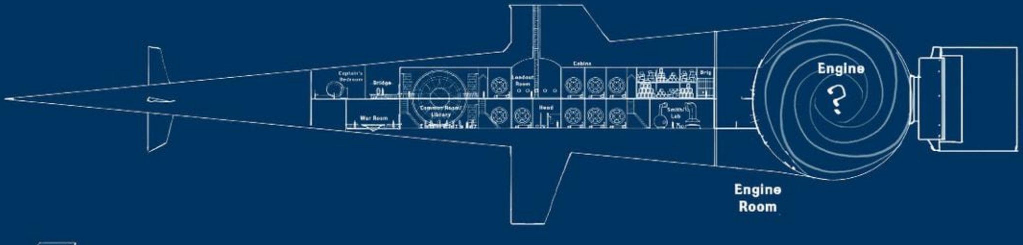

WAR ROOM
BUNKS
CABINS
MESSES
STORAGE
ENGINE ROOM
ENGINE

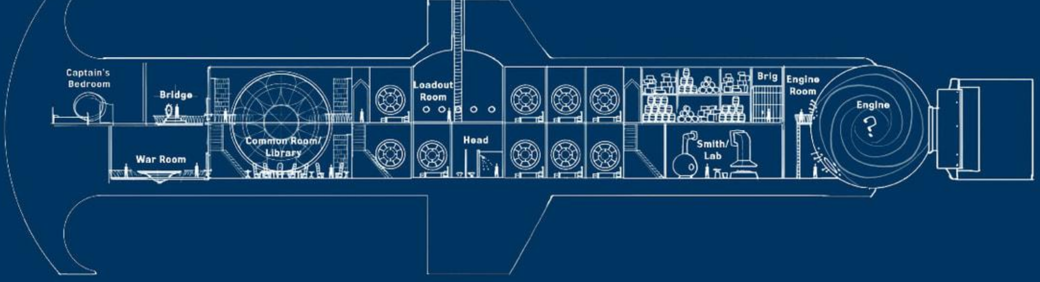

BOAT LAUNCH
STORAGE
ENGINE
BRIDGE
CABINS
WAR ROOM
BRIG
MESS/GALLEY
BED ROOM
BATCAVE

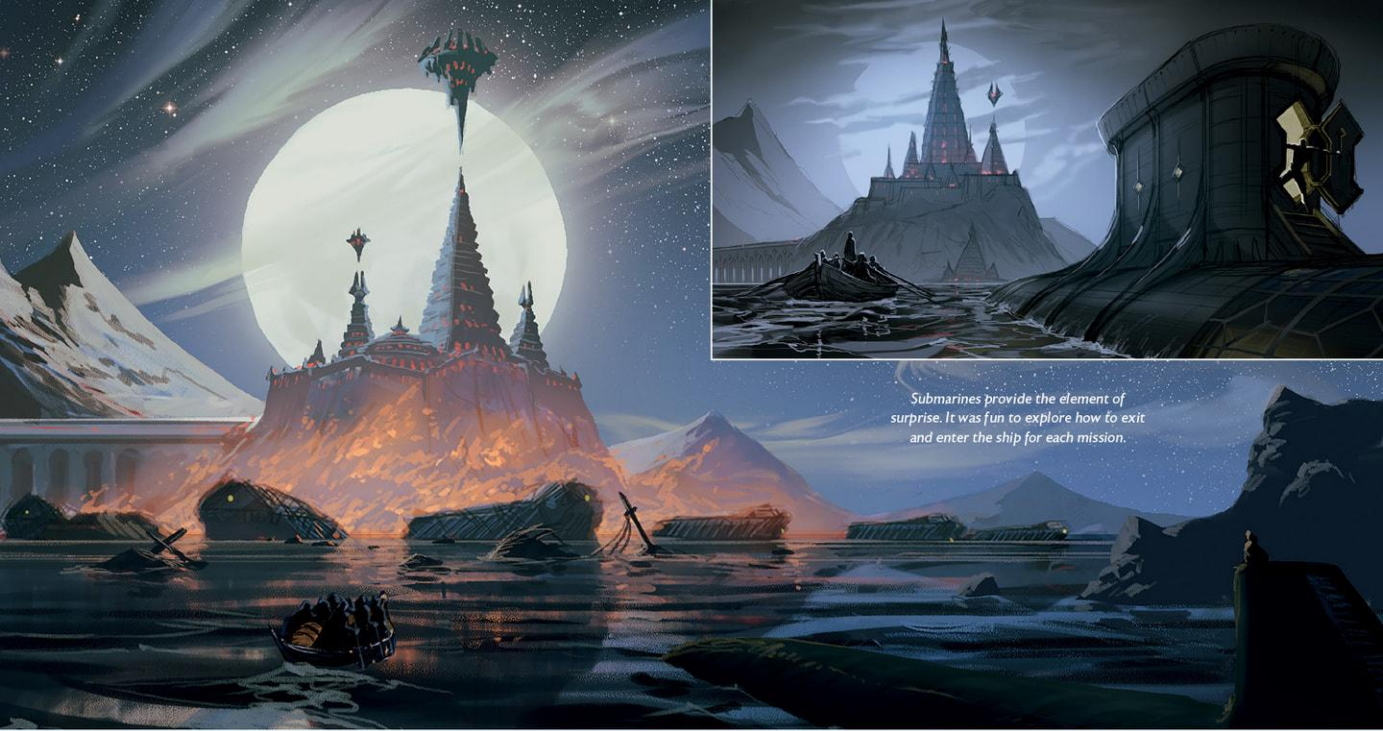
The more we researched and referenced submarine mechanics, the more nautical they became. Subs are incredibly sophisticated marvels of engineering, but the more we referenced them, the more we strained the believability of our fantasy world.


Cabins
Storage
Brig
Engine Room
Bridge
Loadout Room
Engine
?
War Room
Common Room/ Library
Head
Smith/ Lab

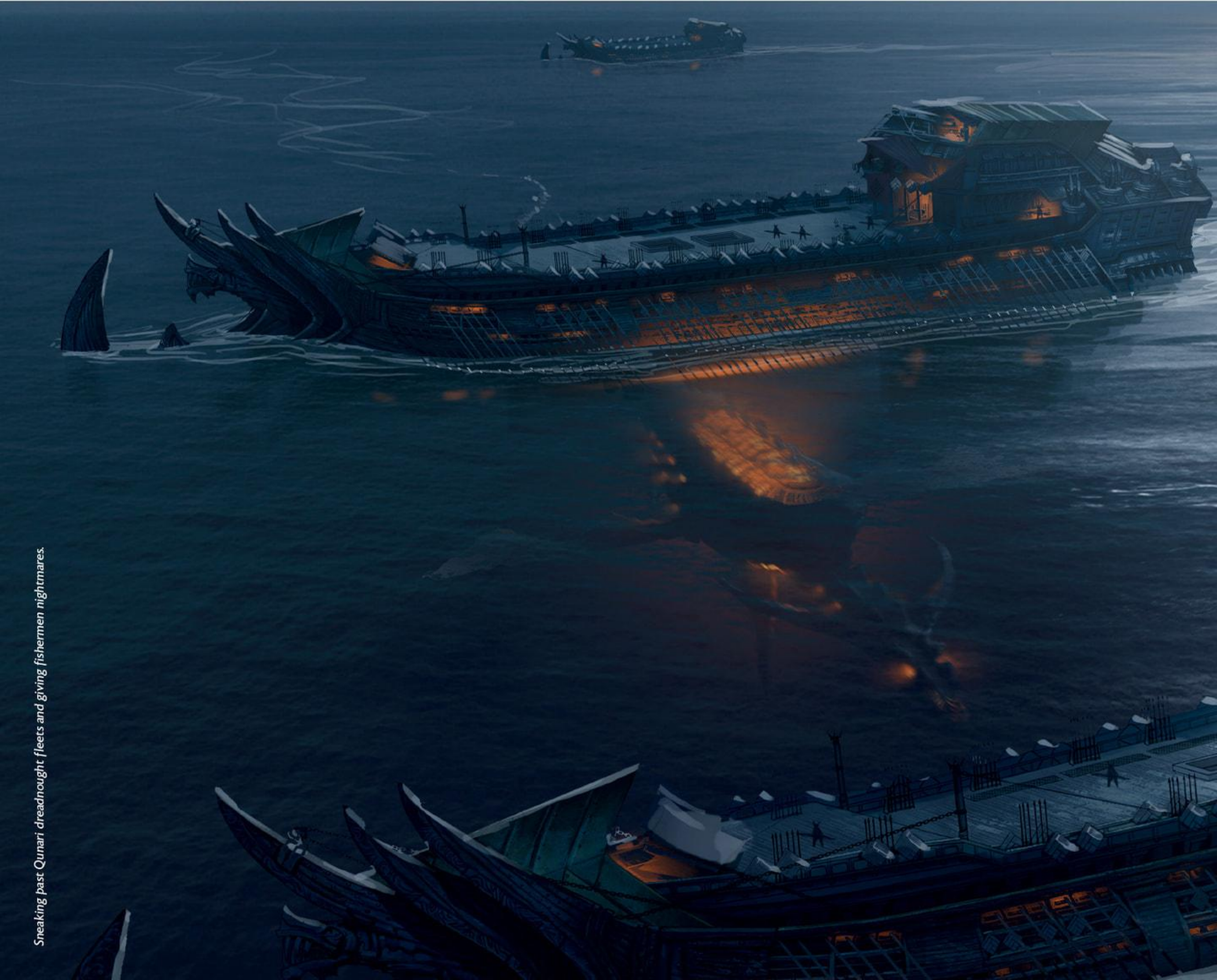

Cabins
Captain's Bedroom
Bridge
Loadout Room
Brig
Engine Room
Engine
?
Common Room/ Library
Head
War Room
Smith/ Lab


Captain's Bedroom
Bridge
Loadout Room
Cabins
Brig
Engine
?
War Room
Common Room/ Library
Head
Smith/ Lab
Engine Room

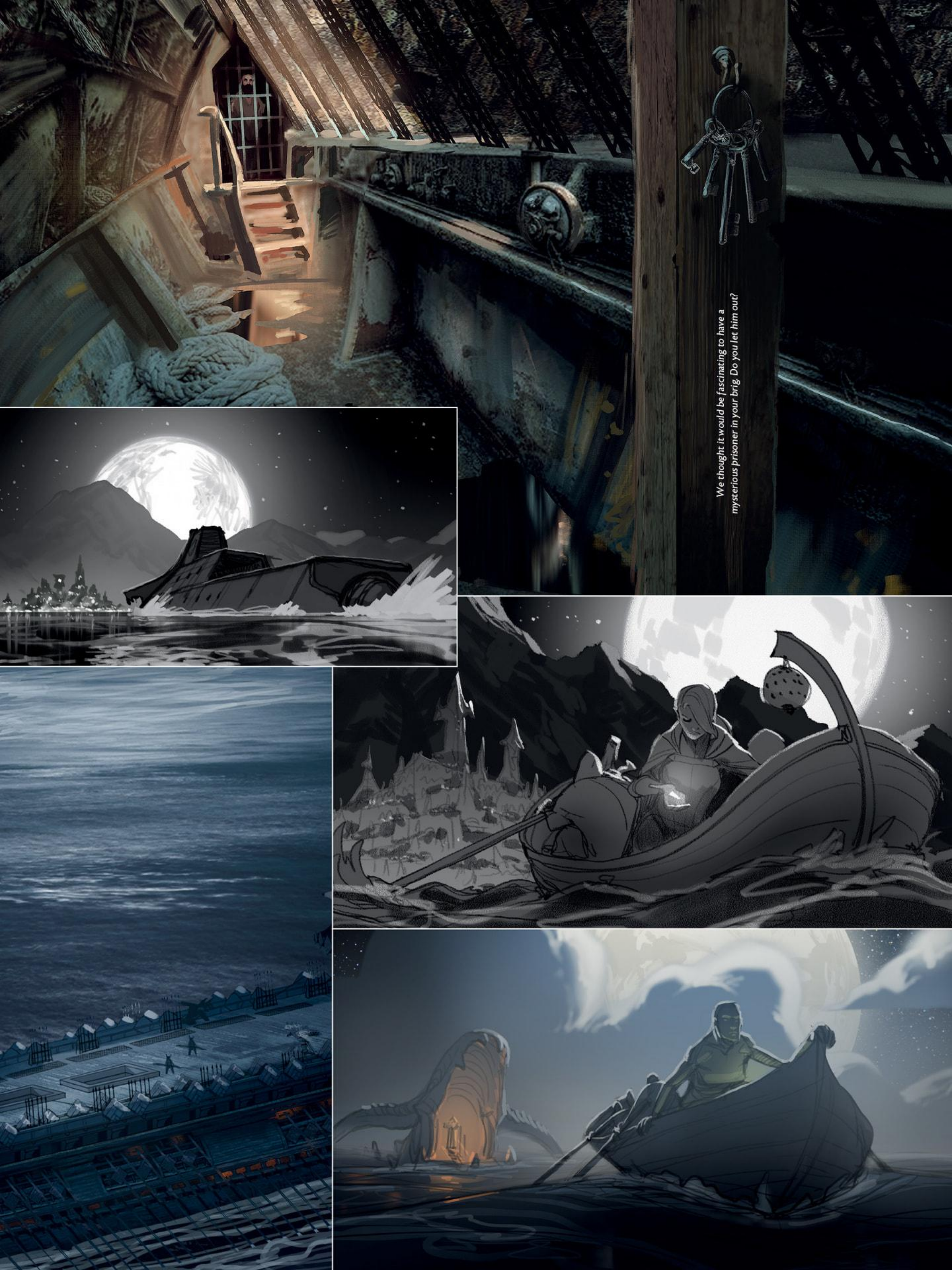

Captain's Bedroom
Bridge
Loadout Room
Brig
Engine Room
Engine
?
Common Room/ Library
War Room
Head
Smith/ Lab



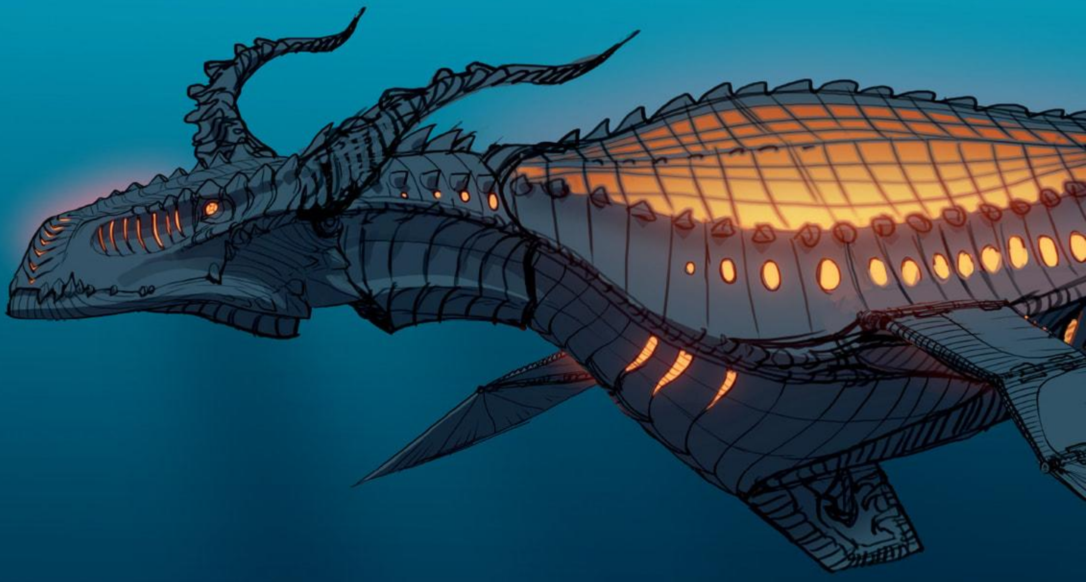
Submarines provide the element of surprise. It was fun to explore how to exit and enter the ship for each mission.

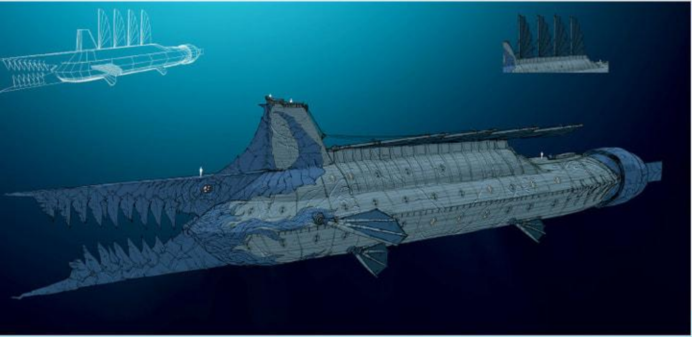


Sneaking past Qunari dreadnought fleets and giving fishermen nightmares.



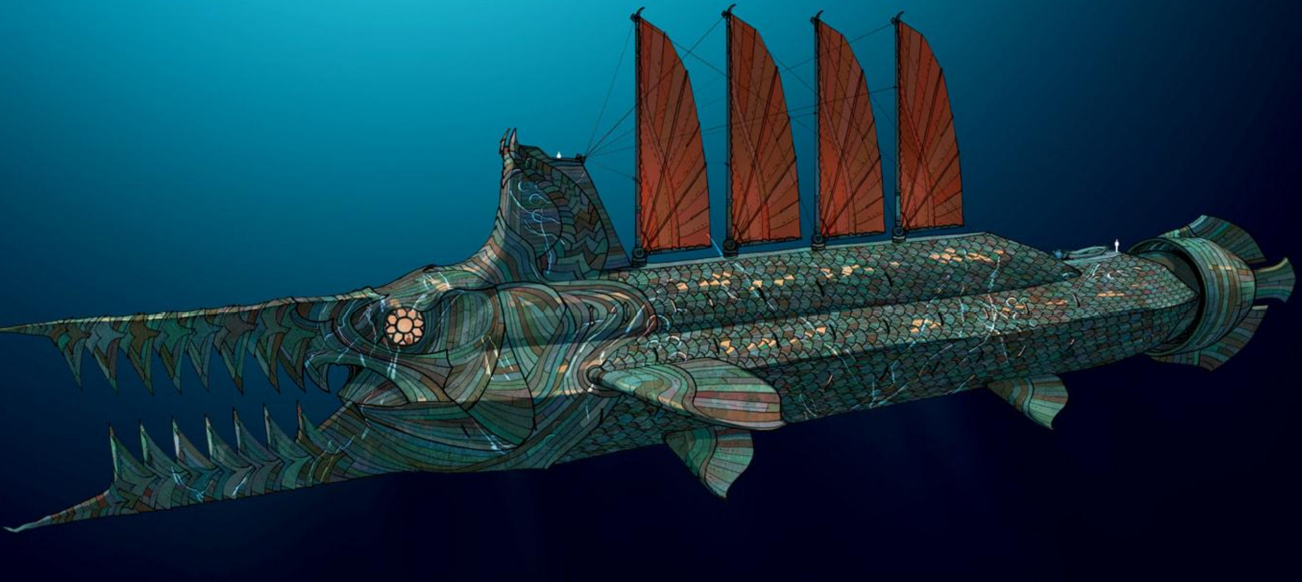
We thought it would be fascinating to have a mysterious prisoner in your brig. Do you let him out?

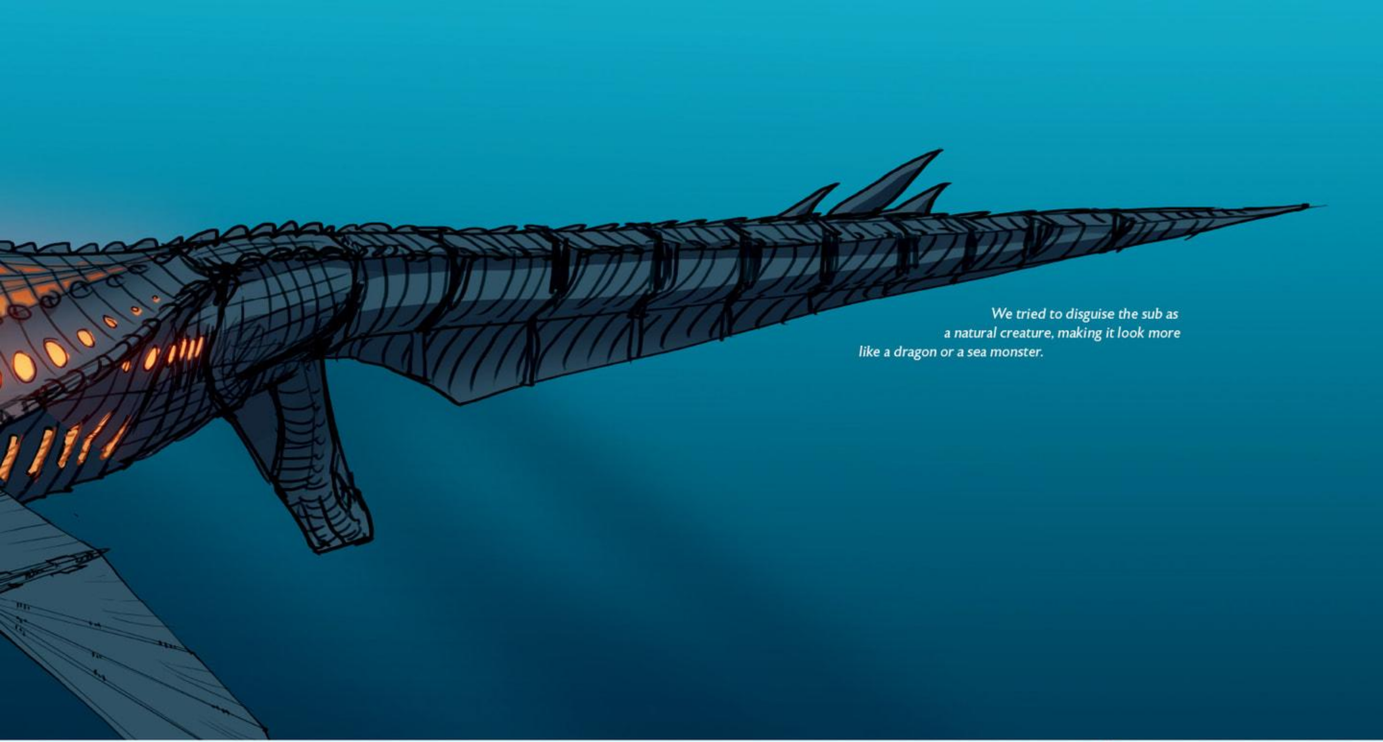




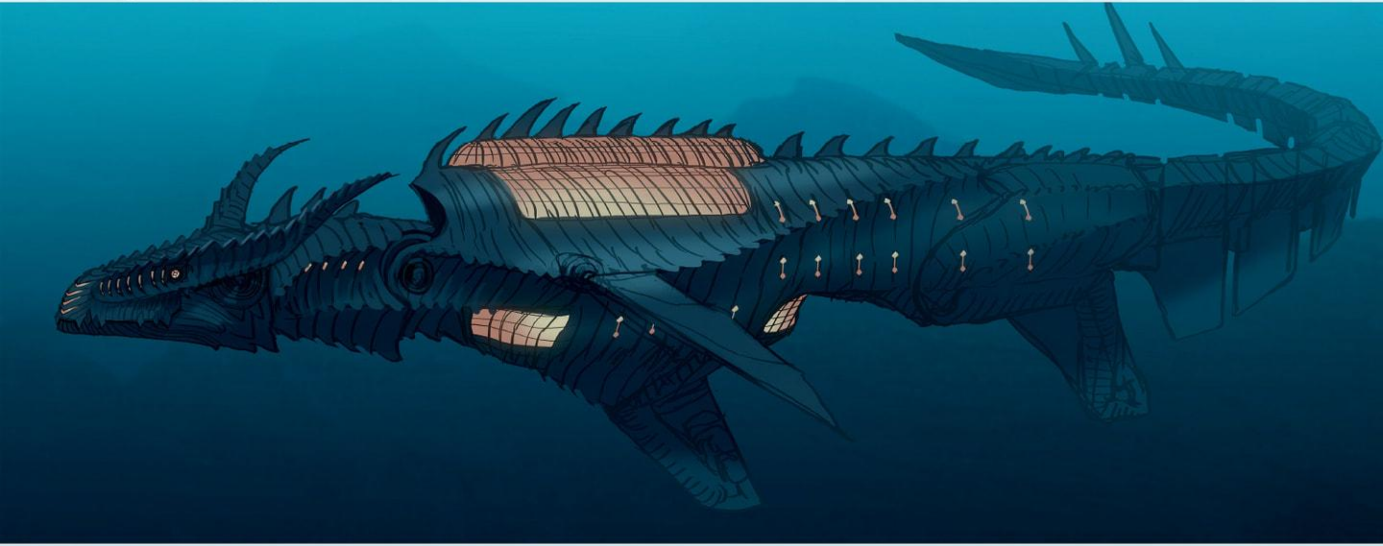
DRAGON SUB

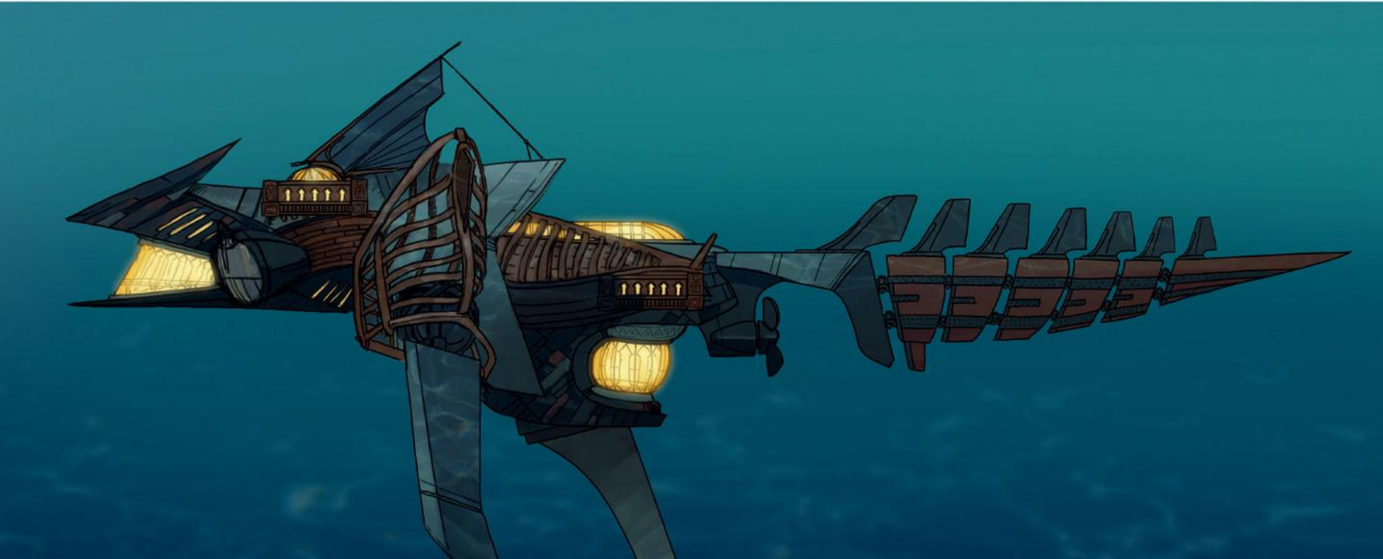
To make a submarine that fit into our world, we tried to make it look more like a sea monster. We had already named it after the dragon Dumat, so it felt like a natural fit.



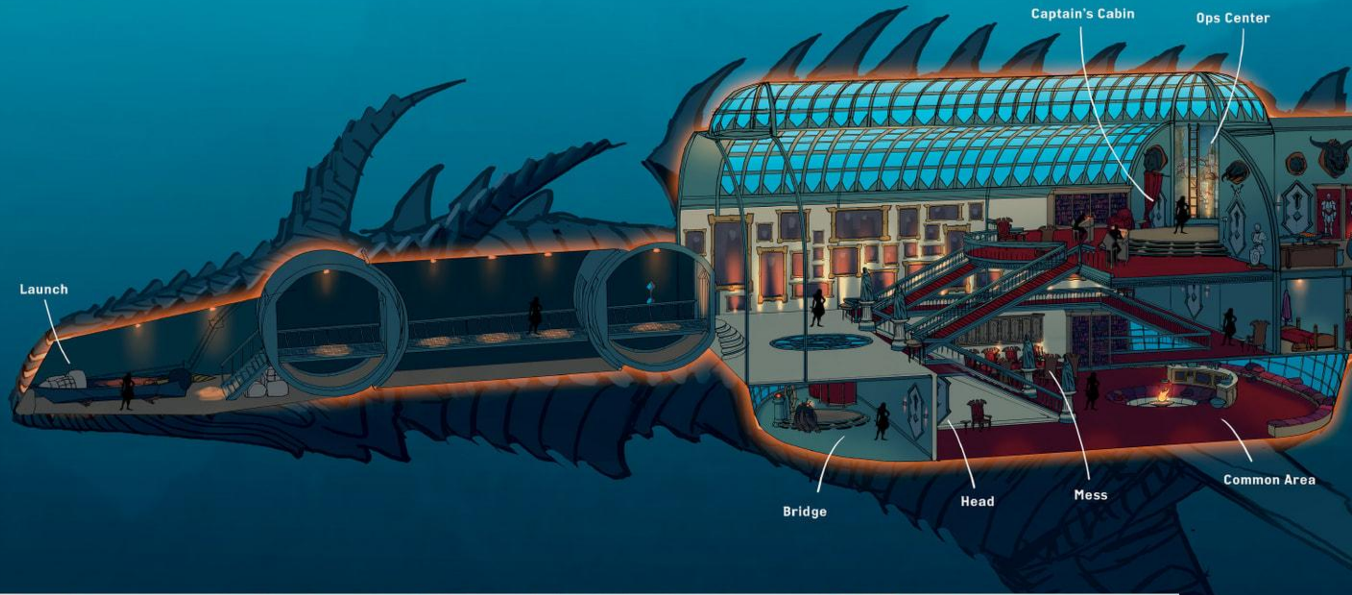


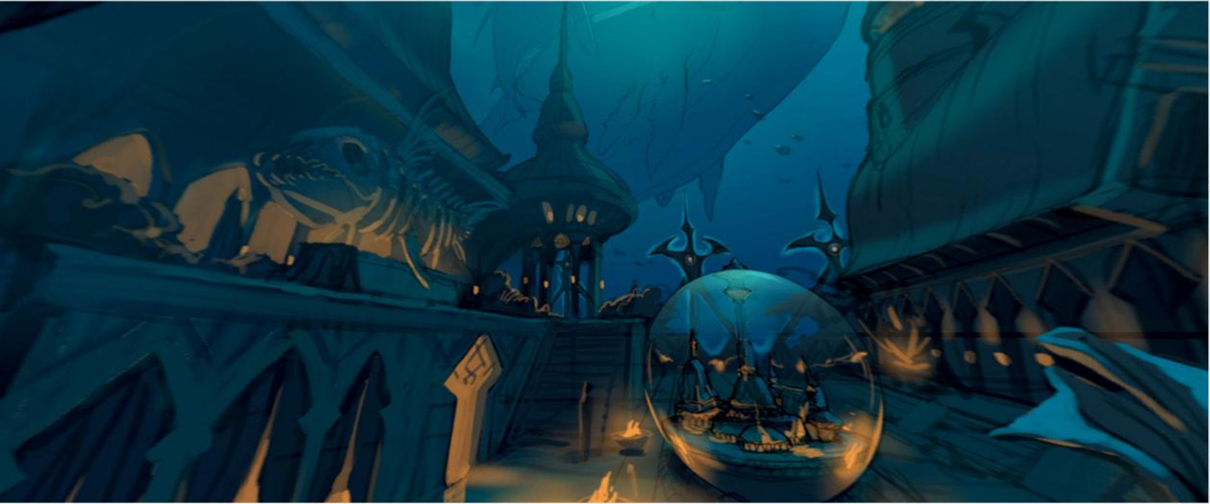
We tried to disguise the sub as a natural creature, making it look more like a dragon or a sea monster.

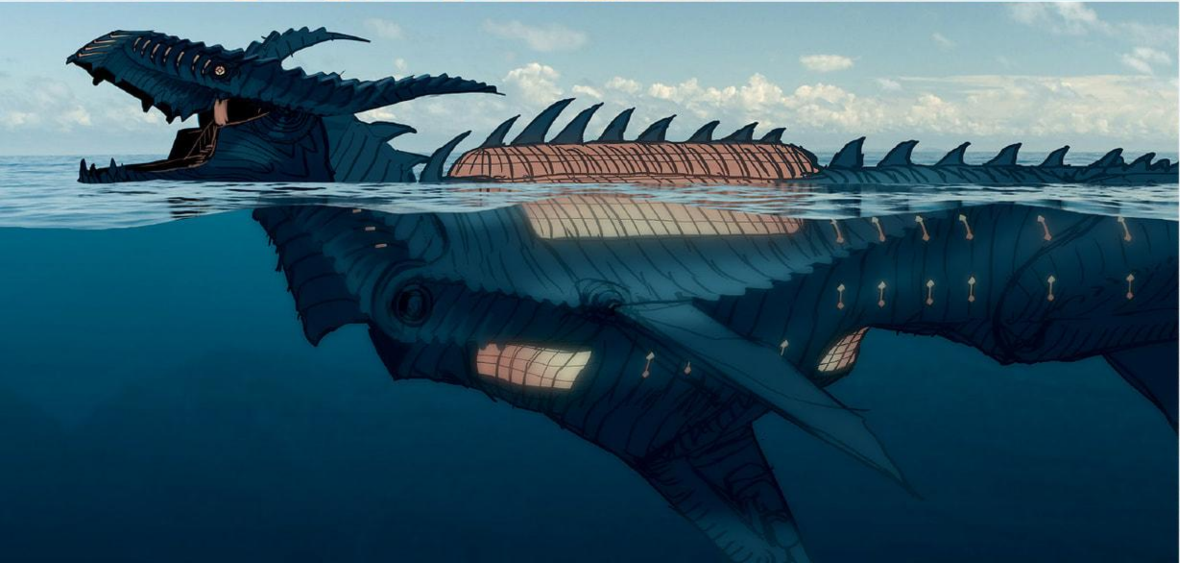


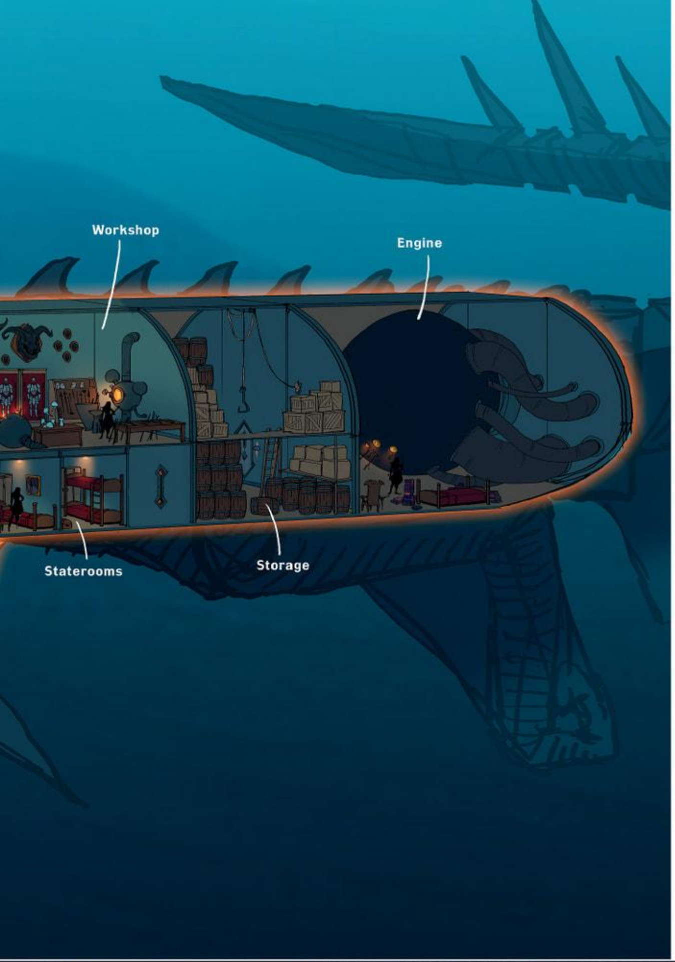


Dumat cutaway. We wanted the interior of the Dumat, built in Tevinter, to feel luxurious and mysterious.

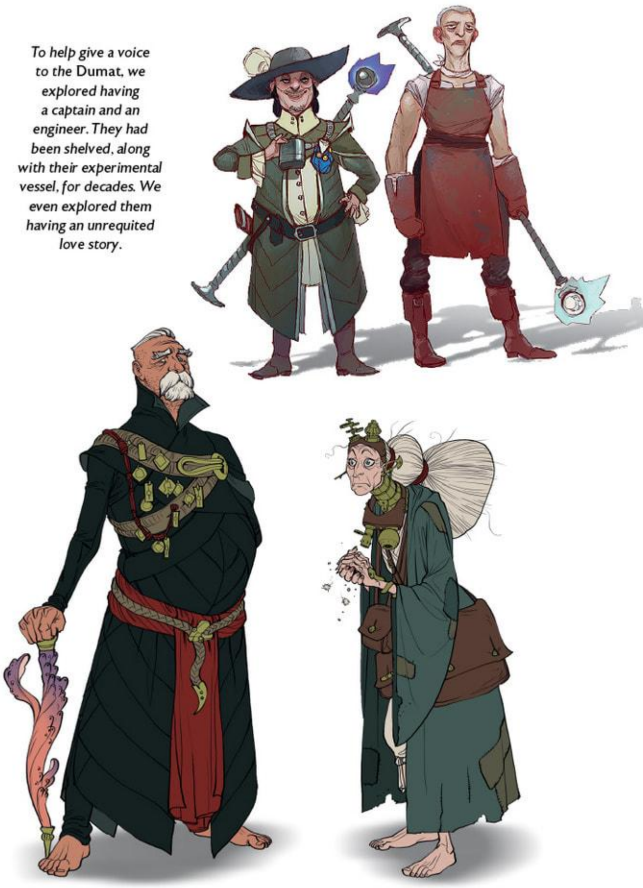

Captain's Cabin
Ops Center
Launch
Bridge
Head
Mess
Common Area

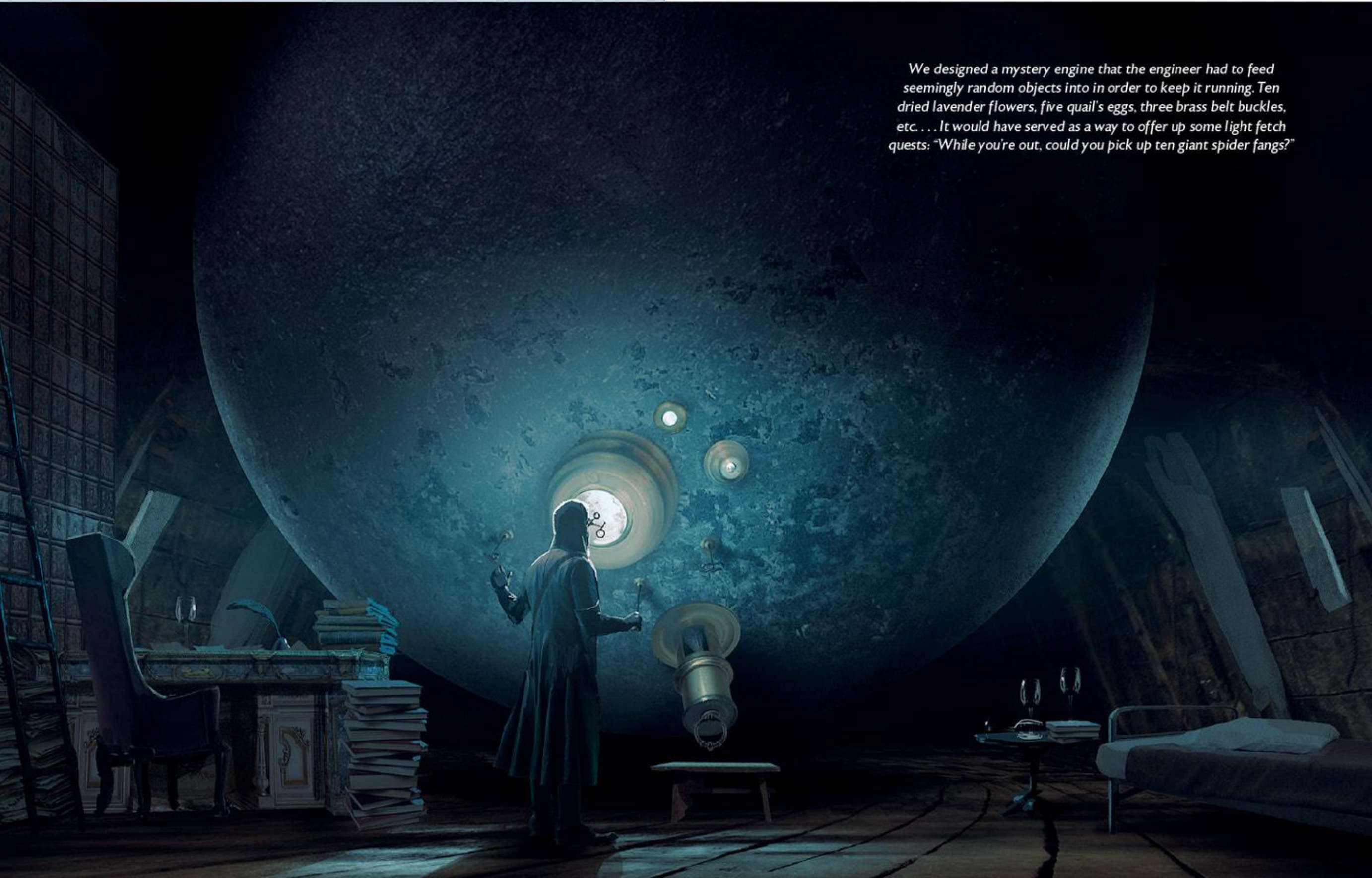






To help give a voice to the Dumat*, we explored having a captain and an engineer. They had been shelved, along with their experimental vessel, for decades. We even explored them having an unrequited love story.*

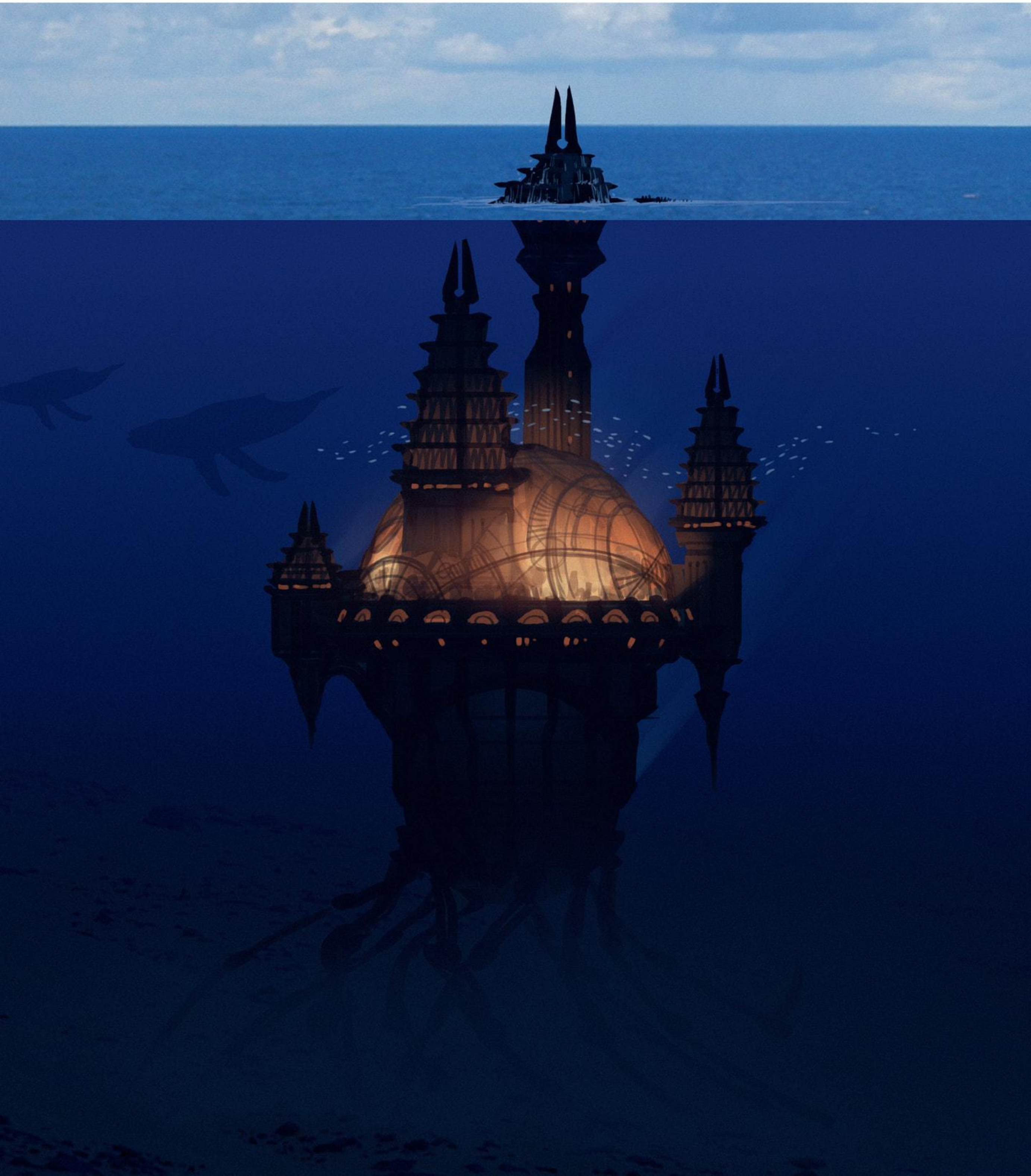


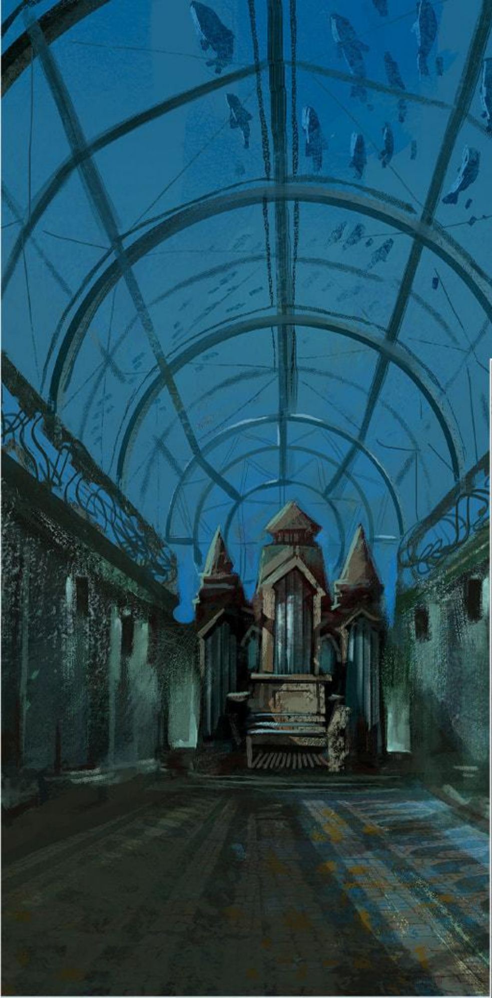


We designed a mystery engine that the engineer had to feed seemingly random objects into in order to keep it running. Ten dried lavender flowers, five quail's eggs, three brass belt buckles, etc. . . . It would have served as a way to offer up some light fetch quests: "While you're out, could you pick up ten giant spider fangs?"

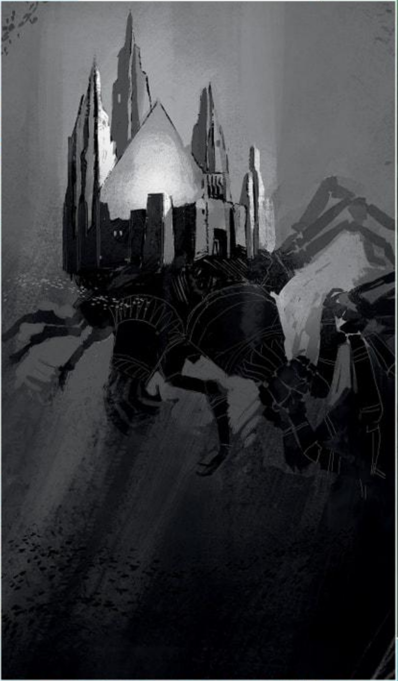
UNDERWATER MANSION

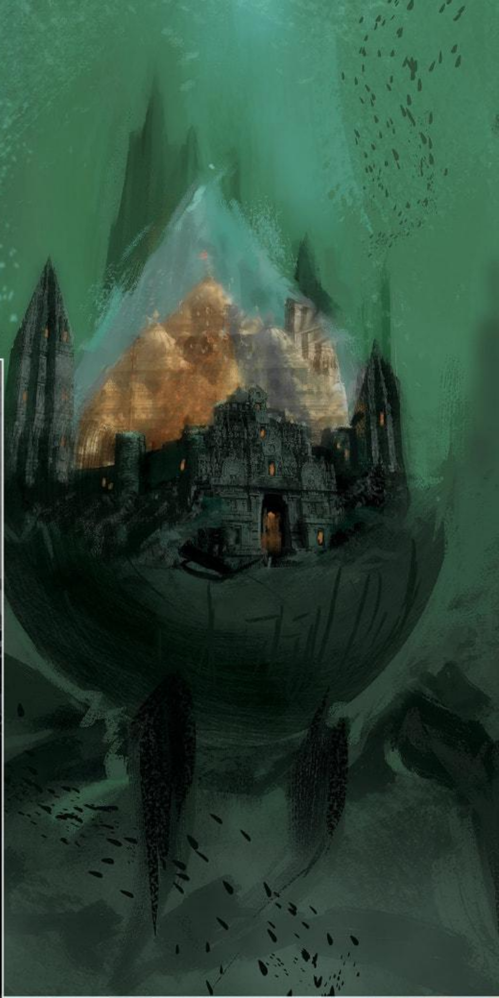
The direction that started to feel the most correct was the underwater mansion on the back of a creature. It was much more mysterious and appropriate to the fantasy genre. It still gave us the awesome underwater vistas, but we weren't limited to the claustrophobic restrictions inherent to submarines.

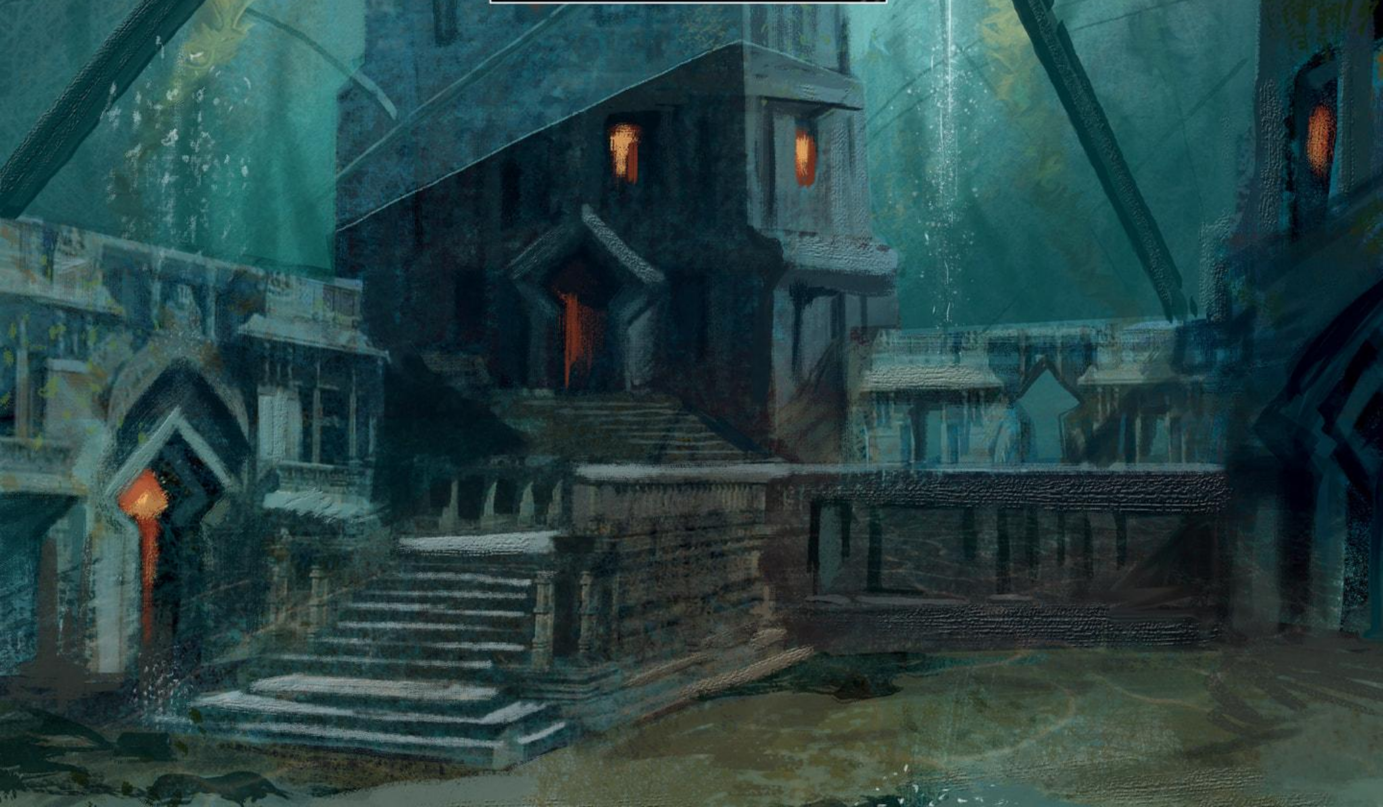


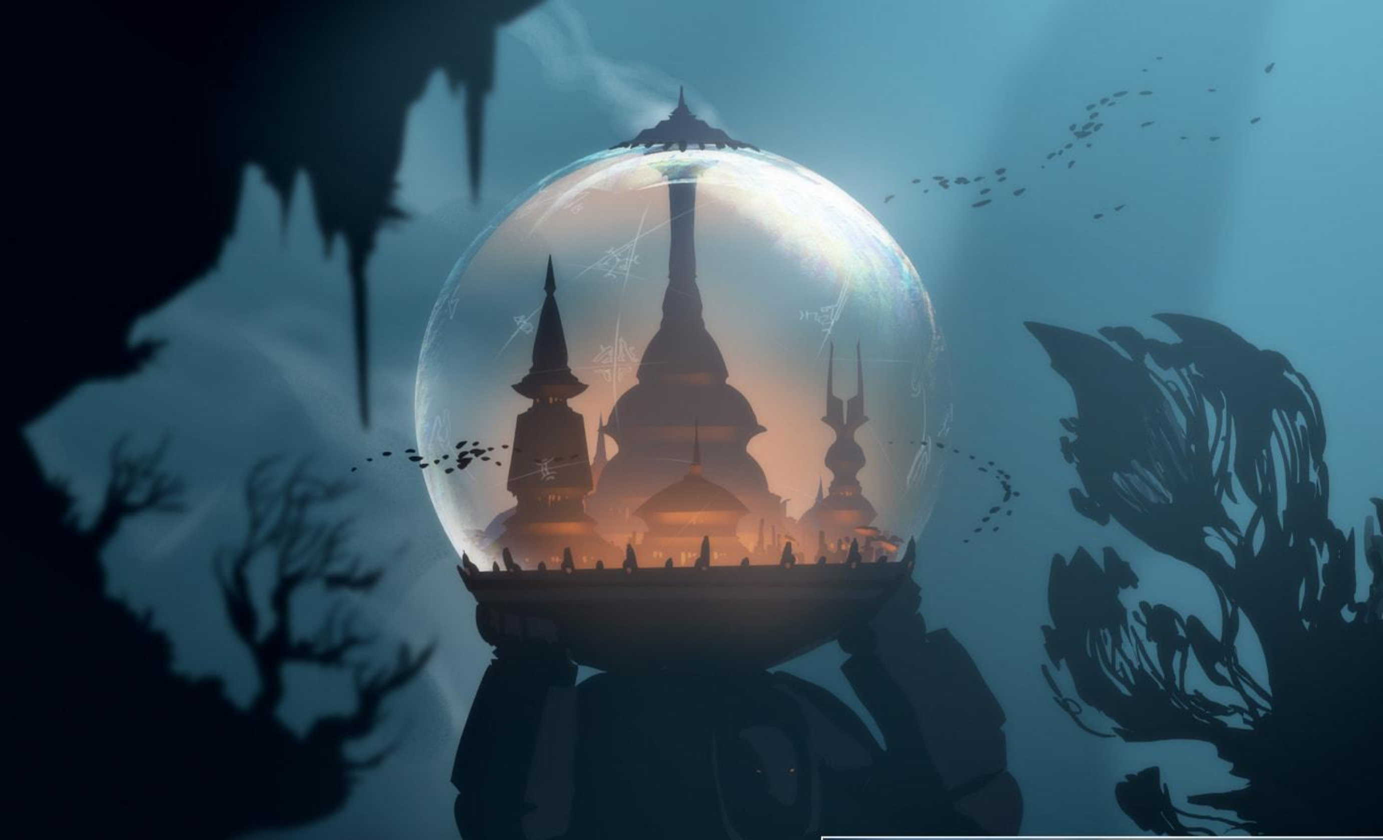


We explored having a giant golem or a colossal sea creature carry the Dumat mansion.

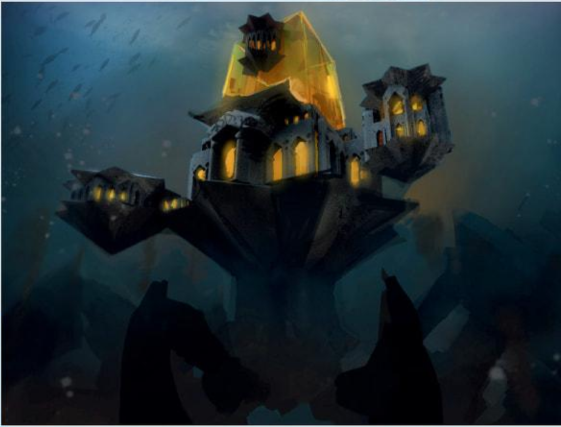


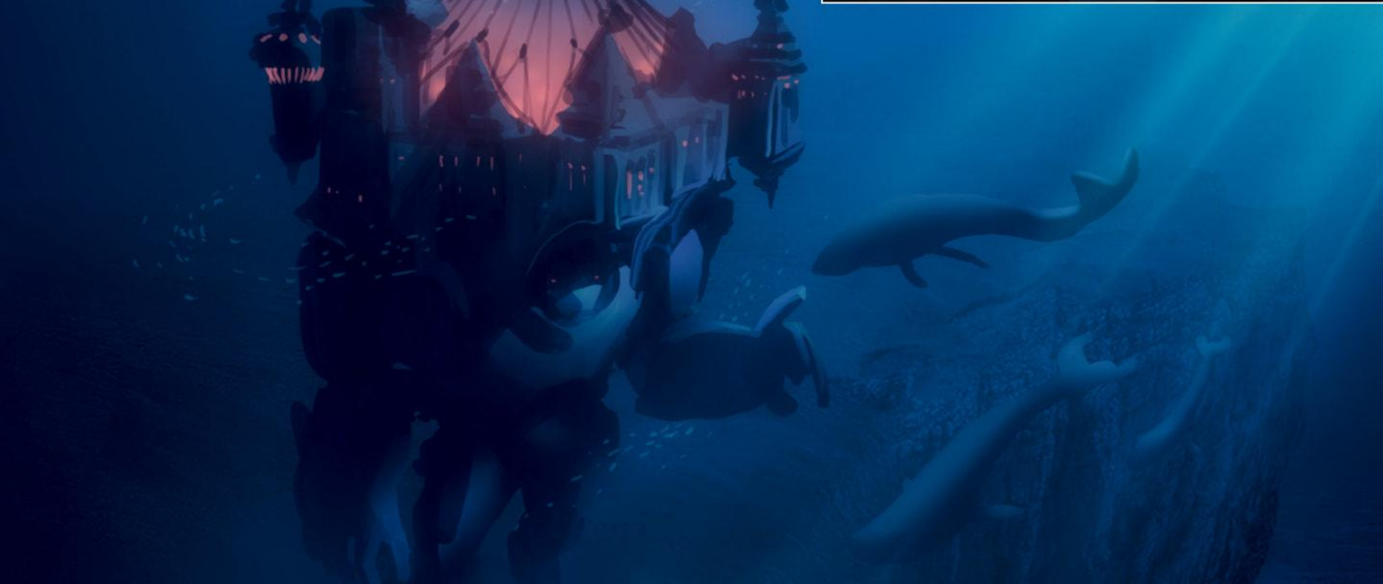


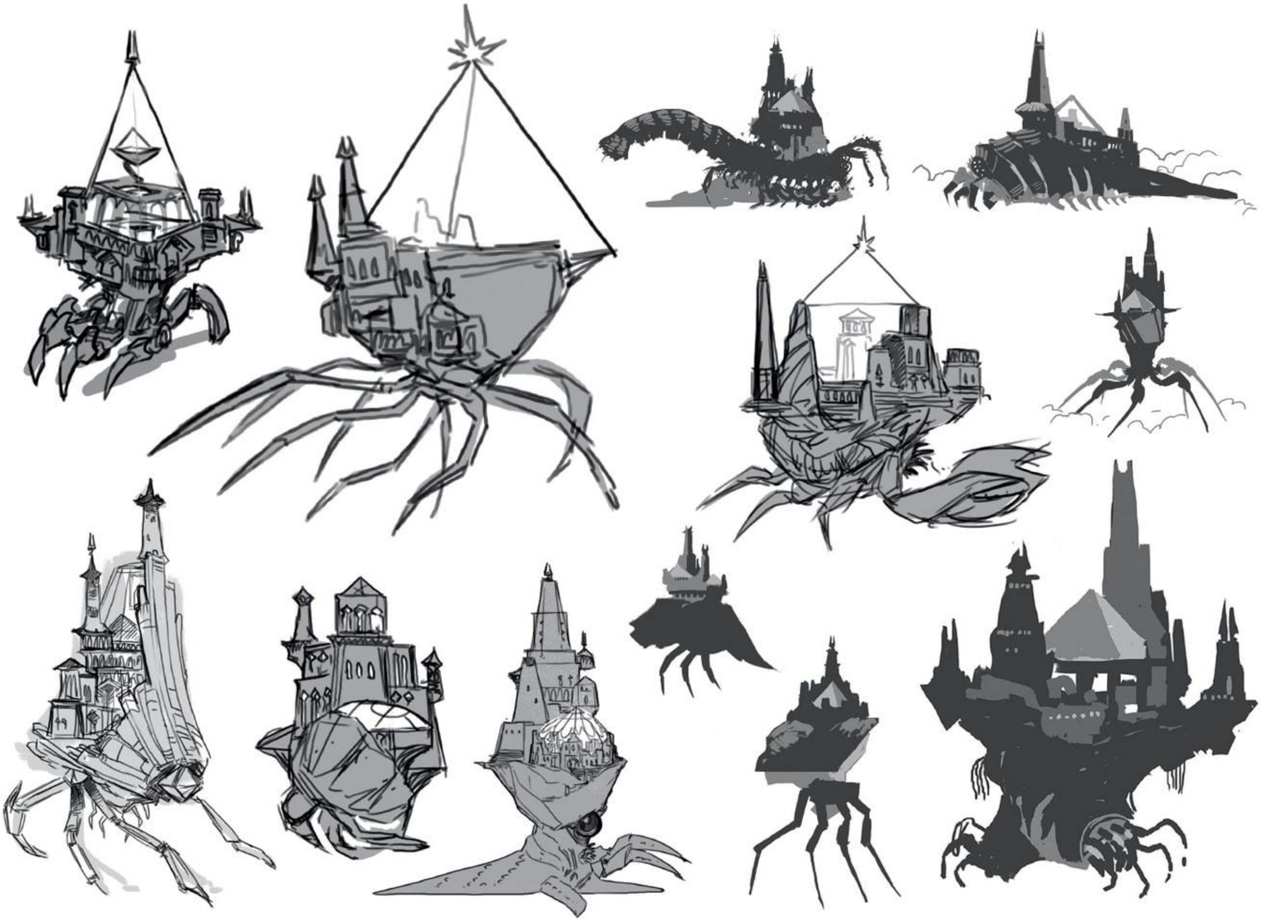


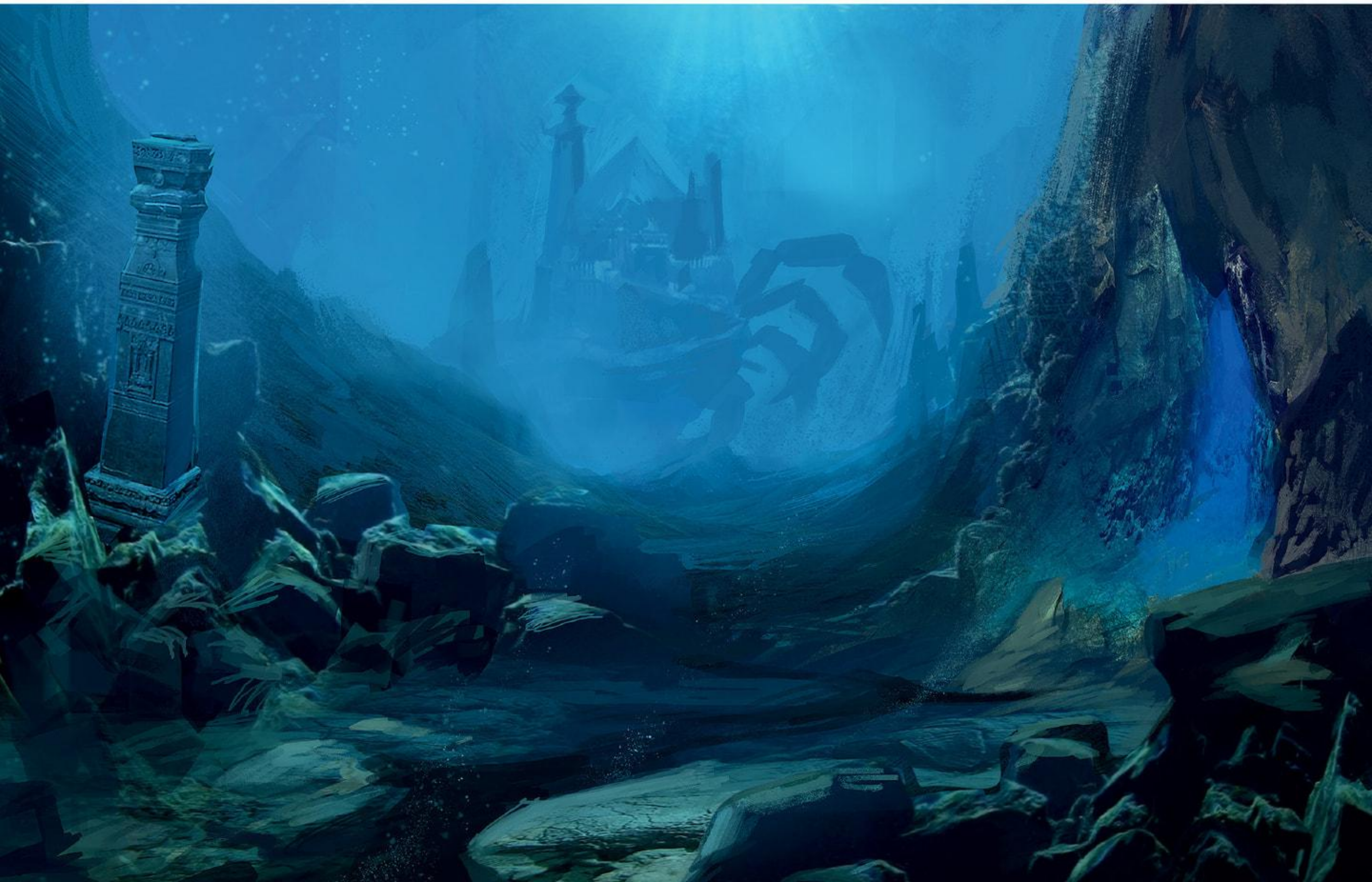


The mansion on the back of a giant . . . something that you would only catch small glimpses of. Is it a giant sea monster? A colossal construct?



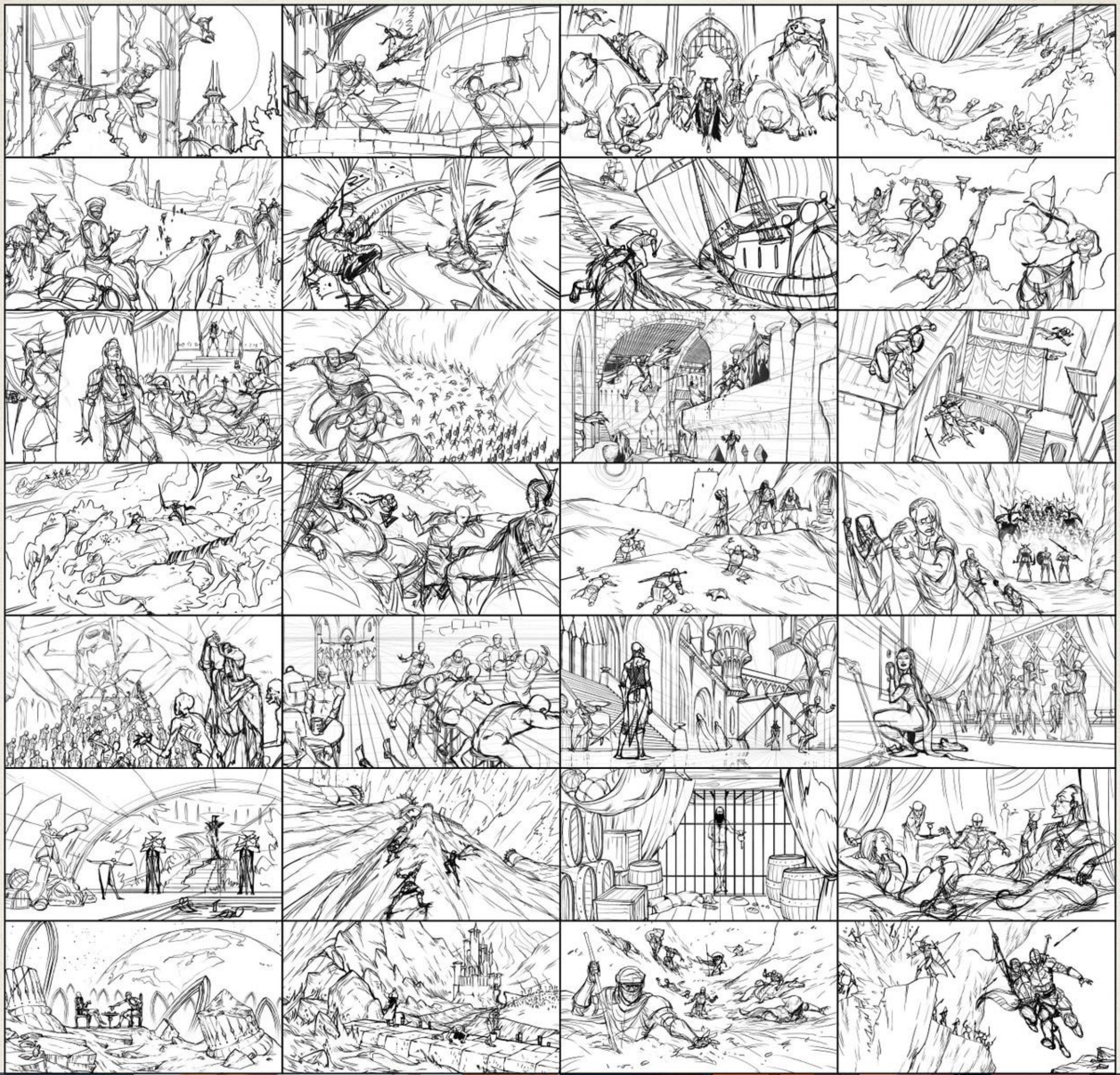


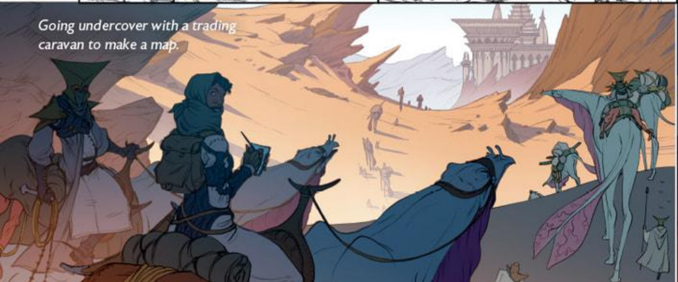




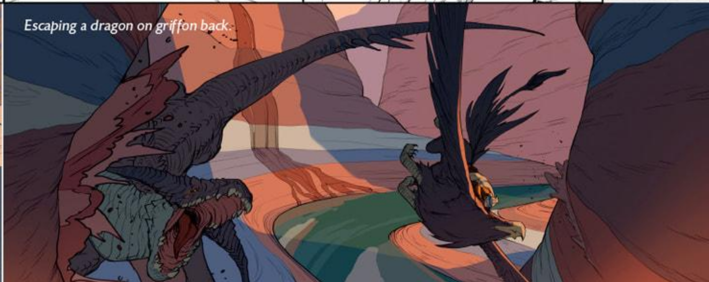
COVERT COMMANDOS

“Covert commandos” was our answer to the “fantasy spy” theme. Rather than slipping into the rogue mindset that that implies, it left room for warriors to smash things and mages to light things up with fireballs. We tried to imagine what the high adventure of covert commandos might look like. It was a lot of fun to explore different team-ups between classes and factions. How do they solve problems differently?

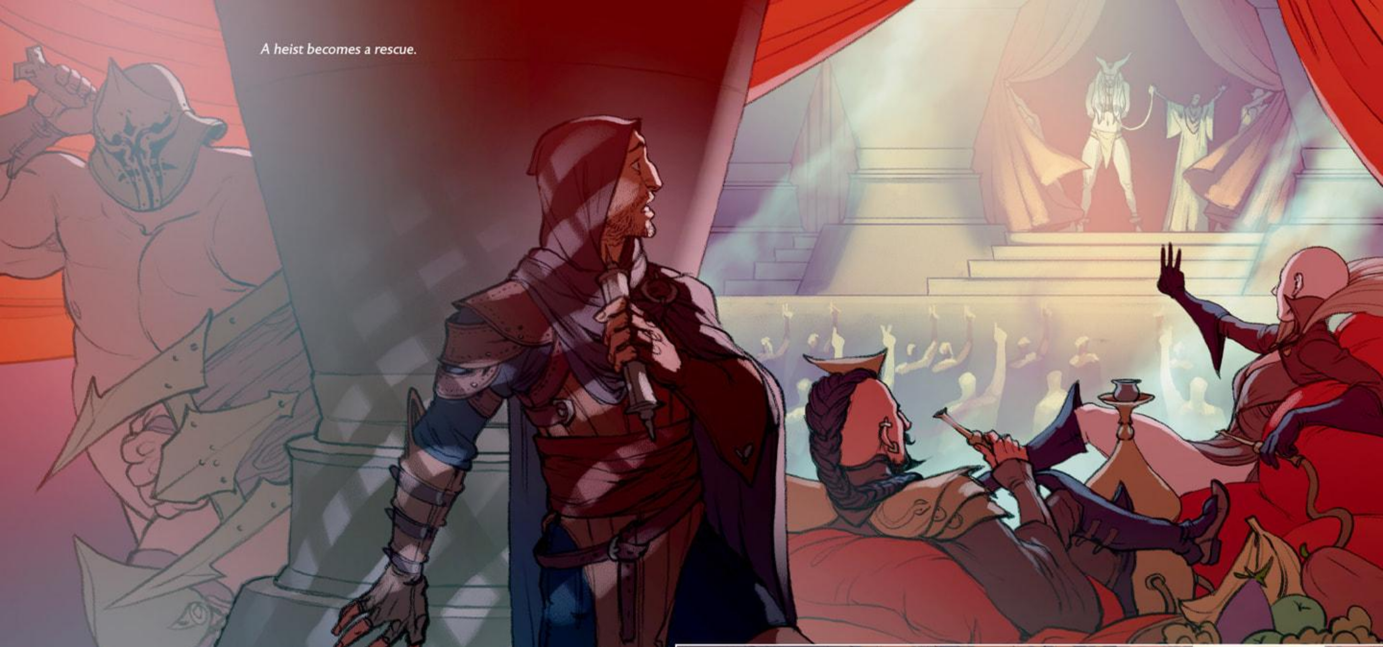




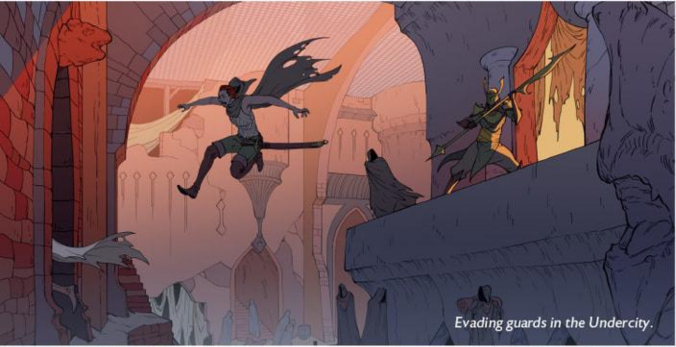
Going undercover with a trading caravan to make a map.



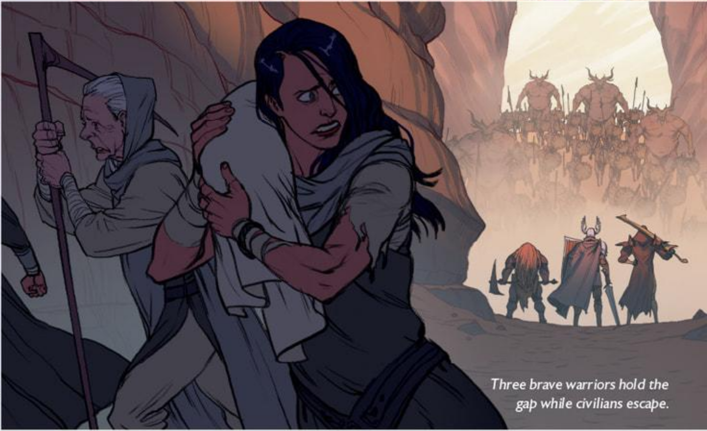
Escaping a dragon on griffon back.



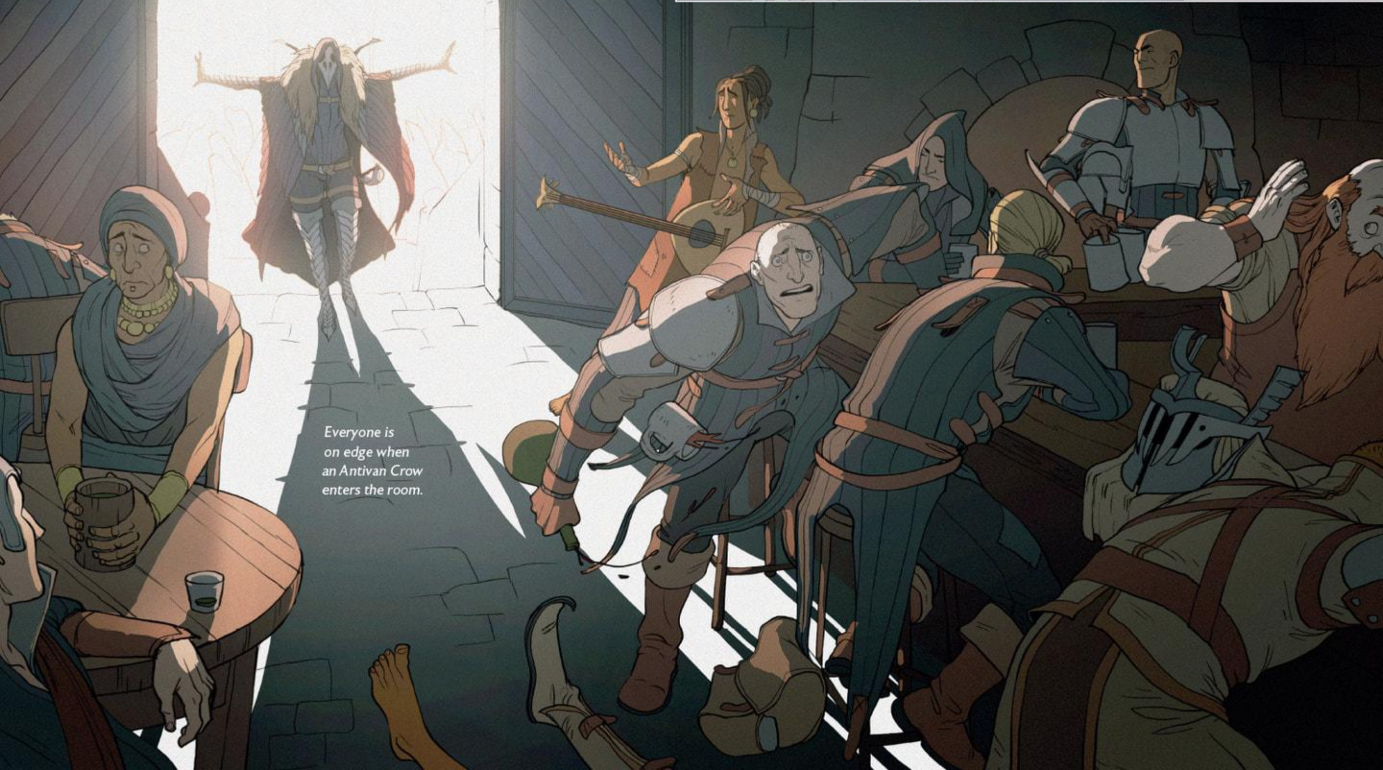
A heist becomes a rescue.



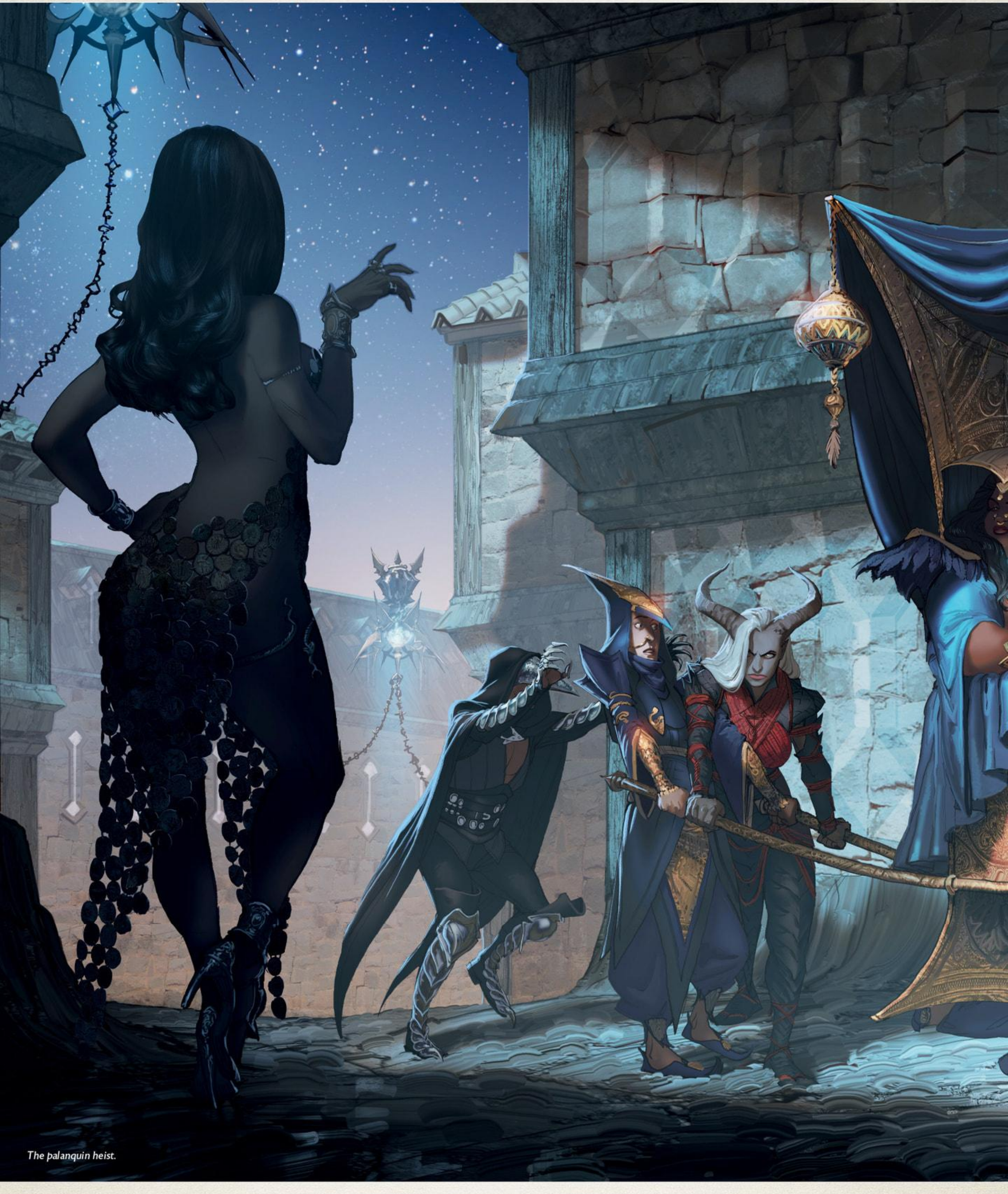
Evading guards in the Undercity.



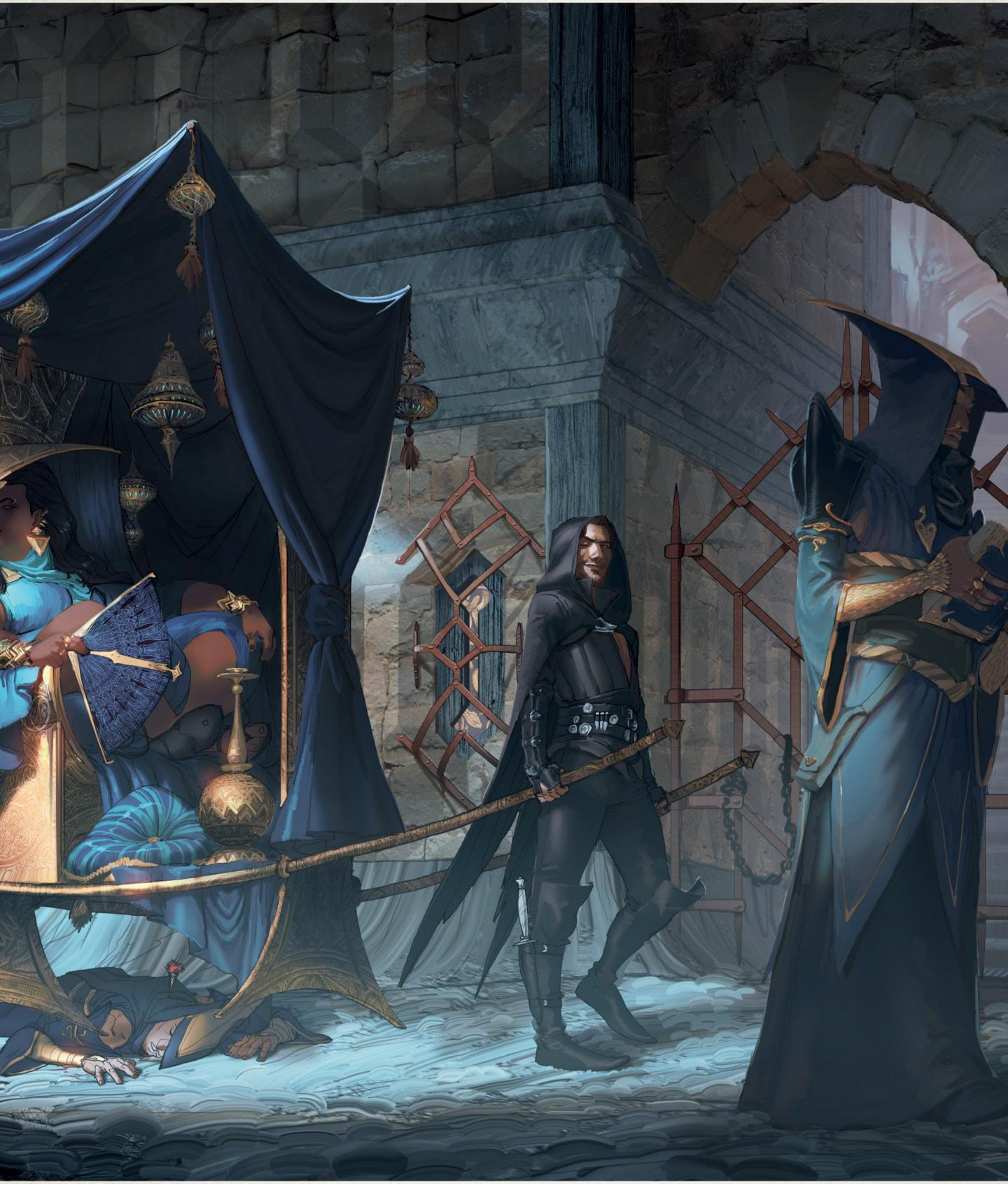
Three brave warriors hold the gap while civilians escape.

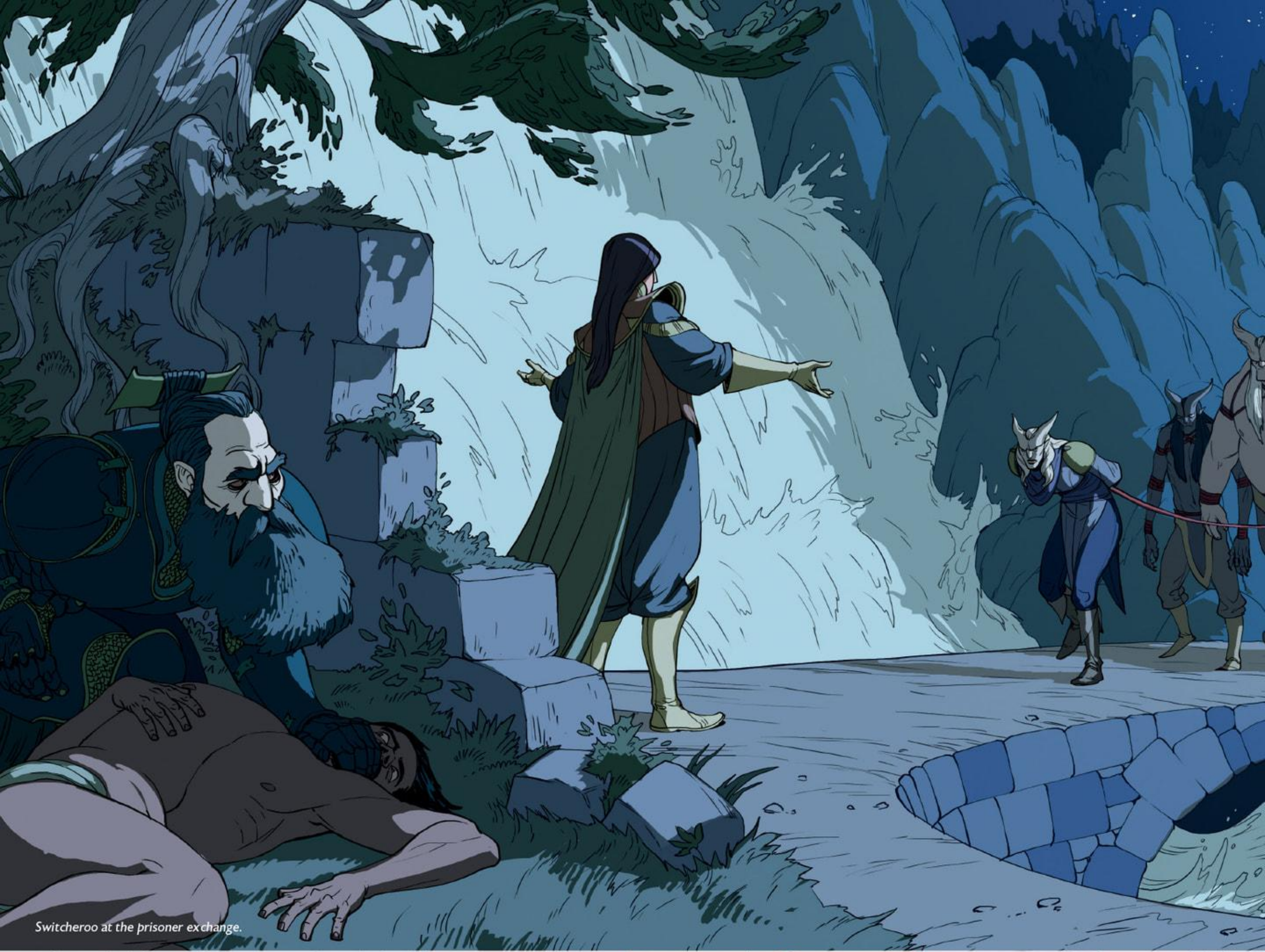


Everyone is on edge when an Antivan Crow enters the room.



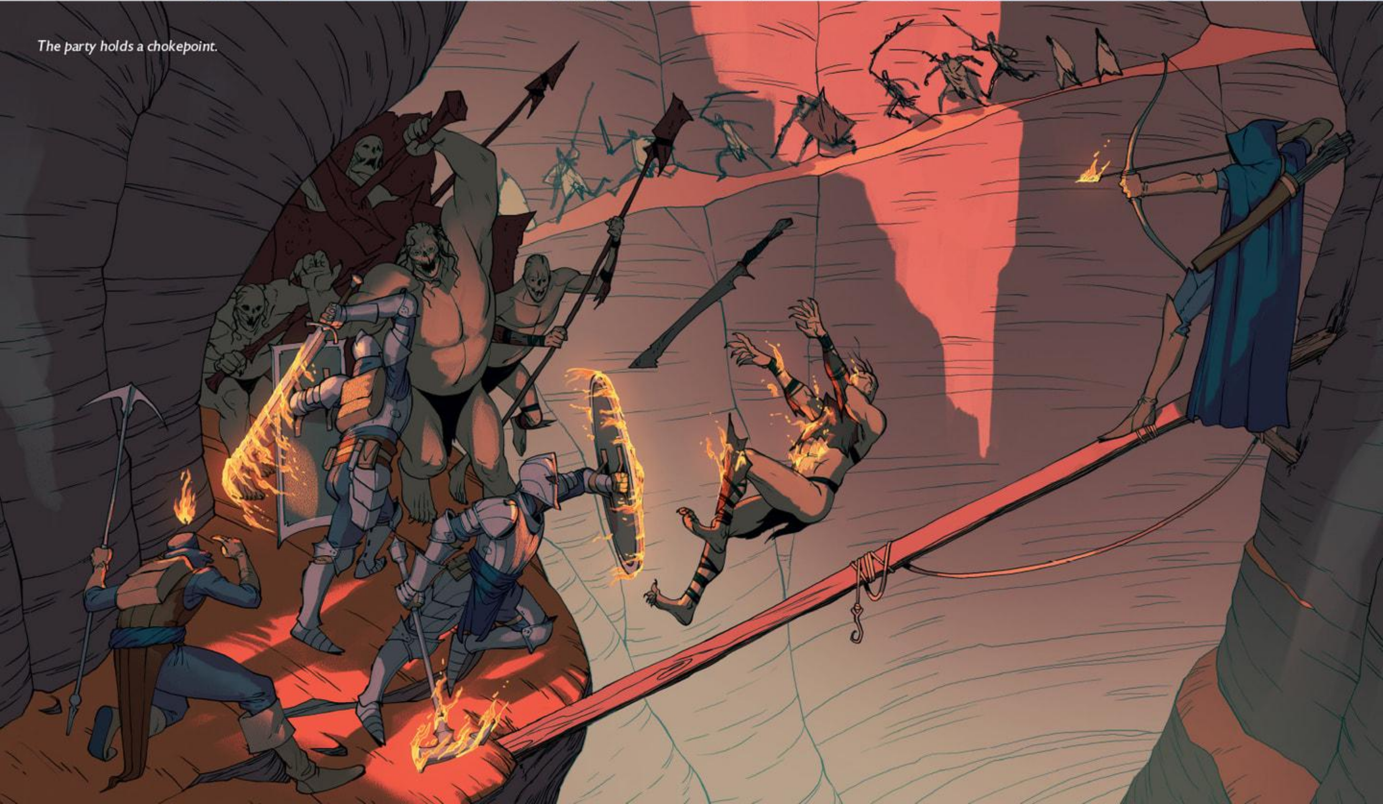
The palanquin heist.

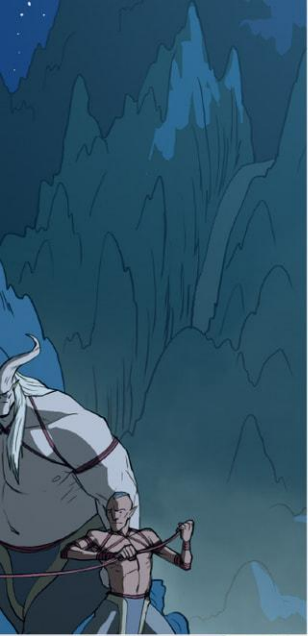


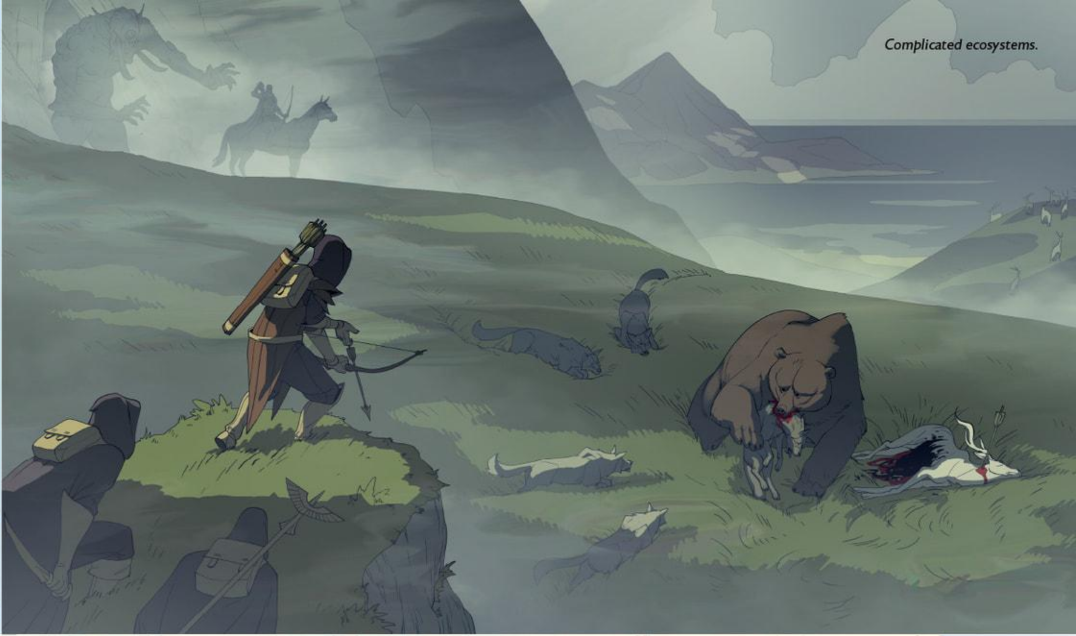


Switcheroo at the prisoner exchange.

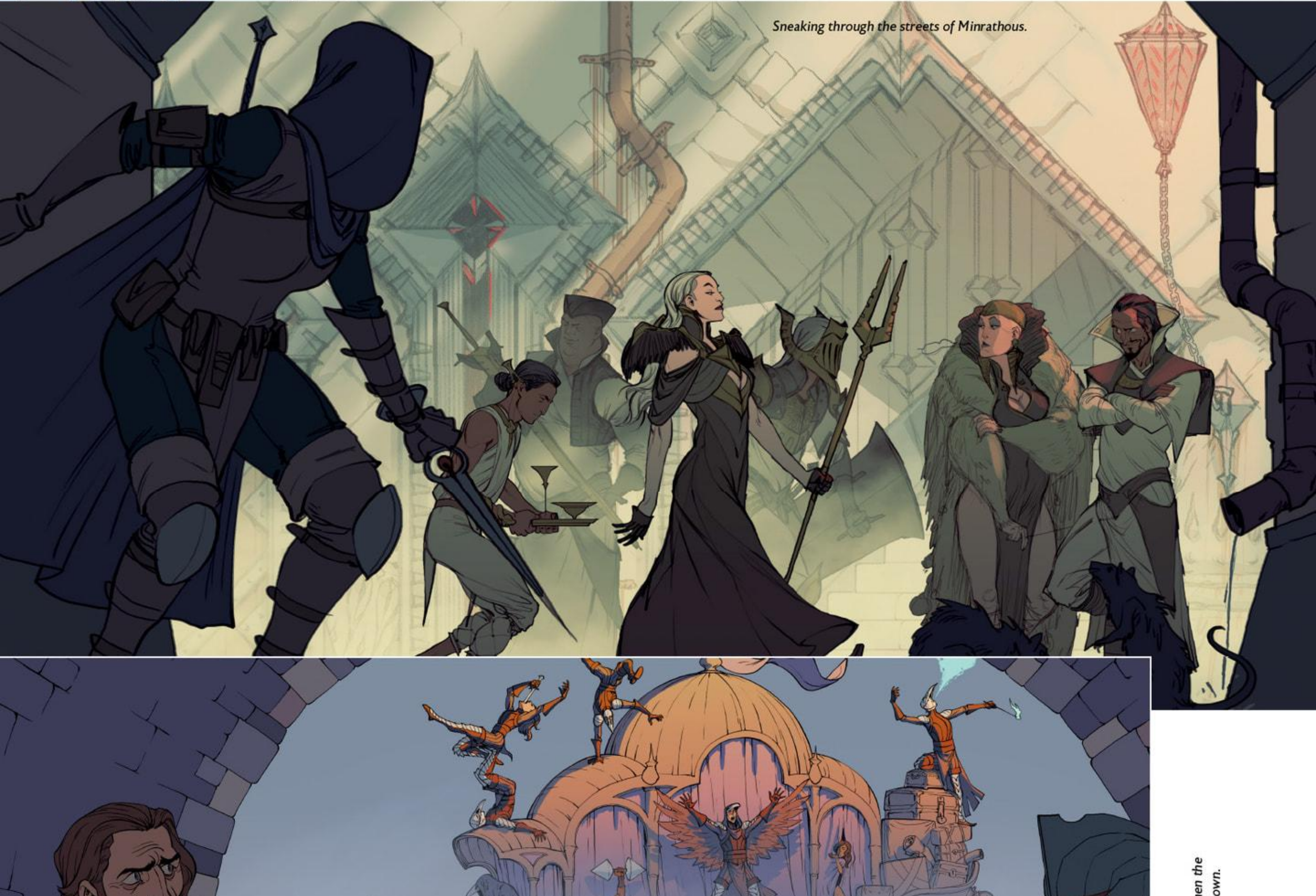
The party holds a chokepoint.



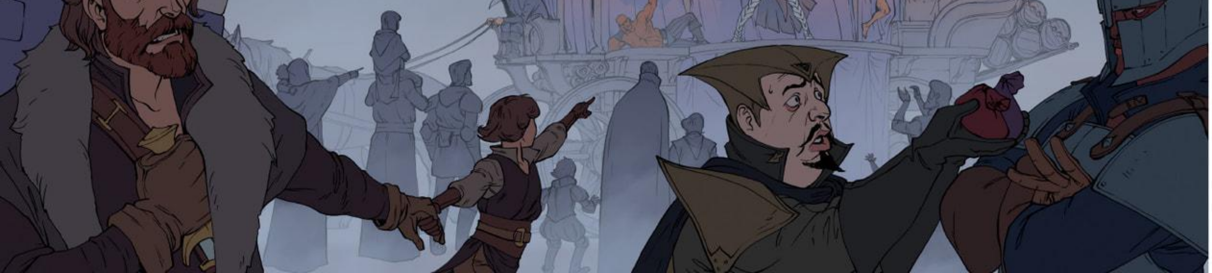




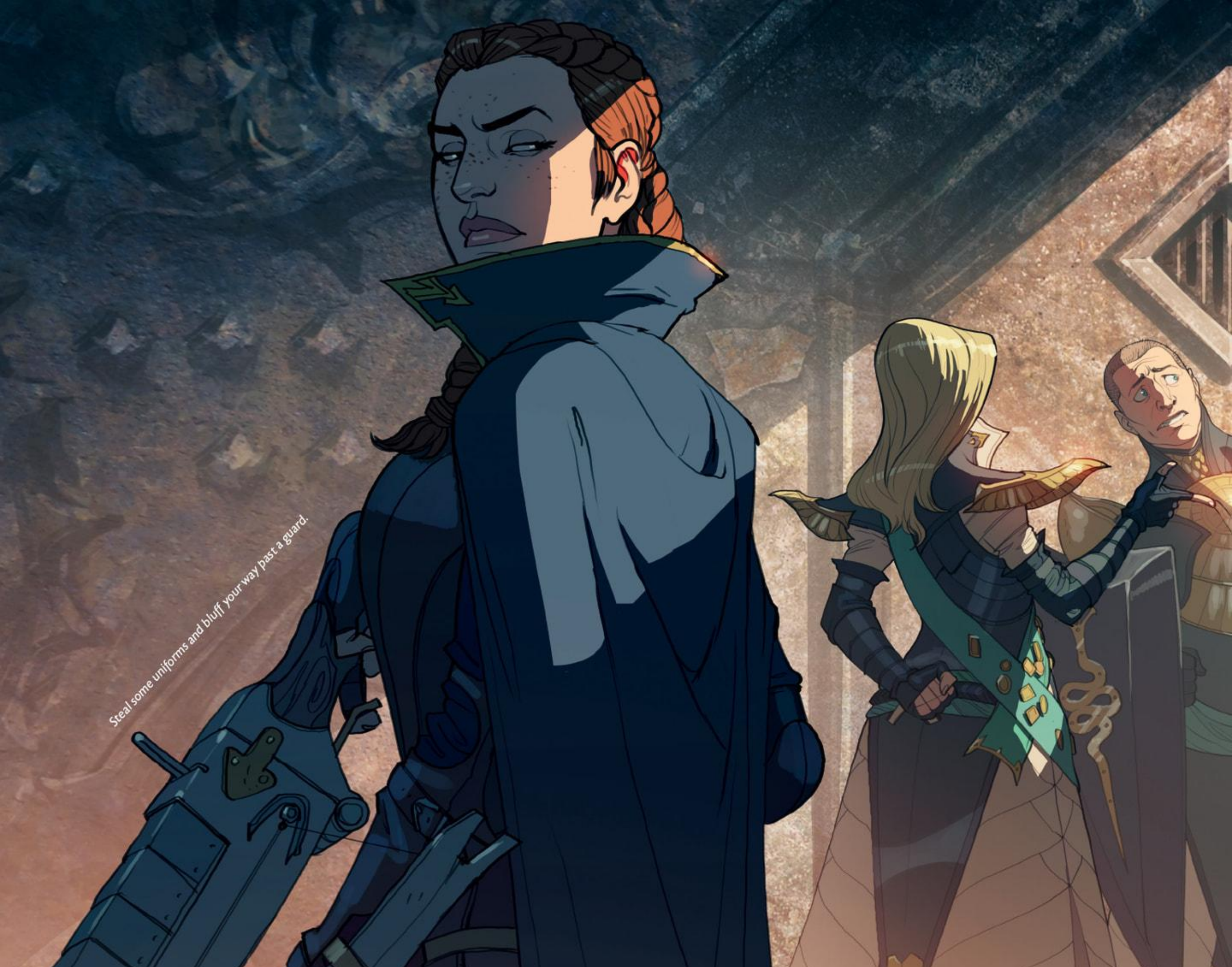
Complicated ecosystems.



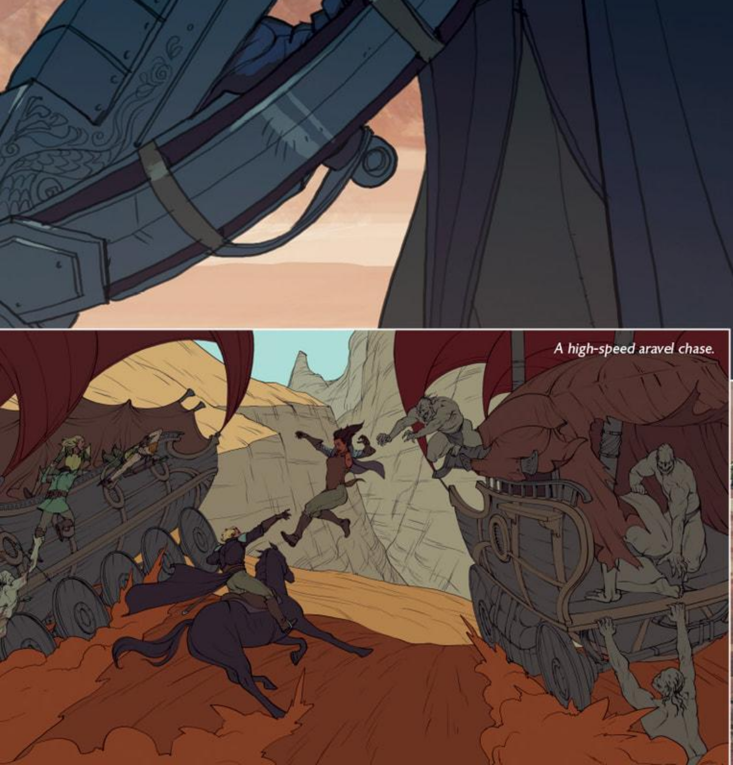
Sneaking through the streets of Minrathous.



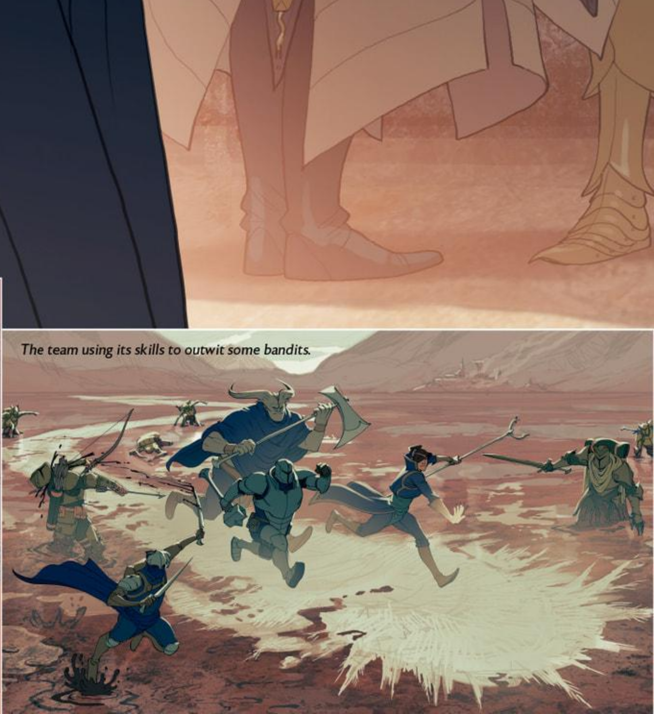
Scoundrels flee when the Crows come to town.



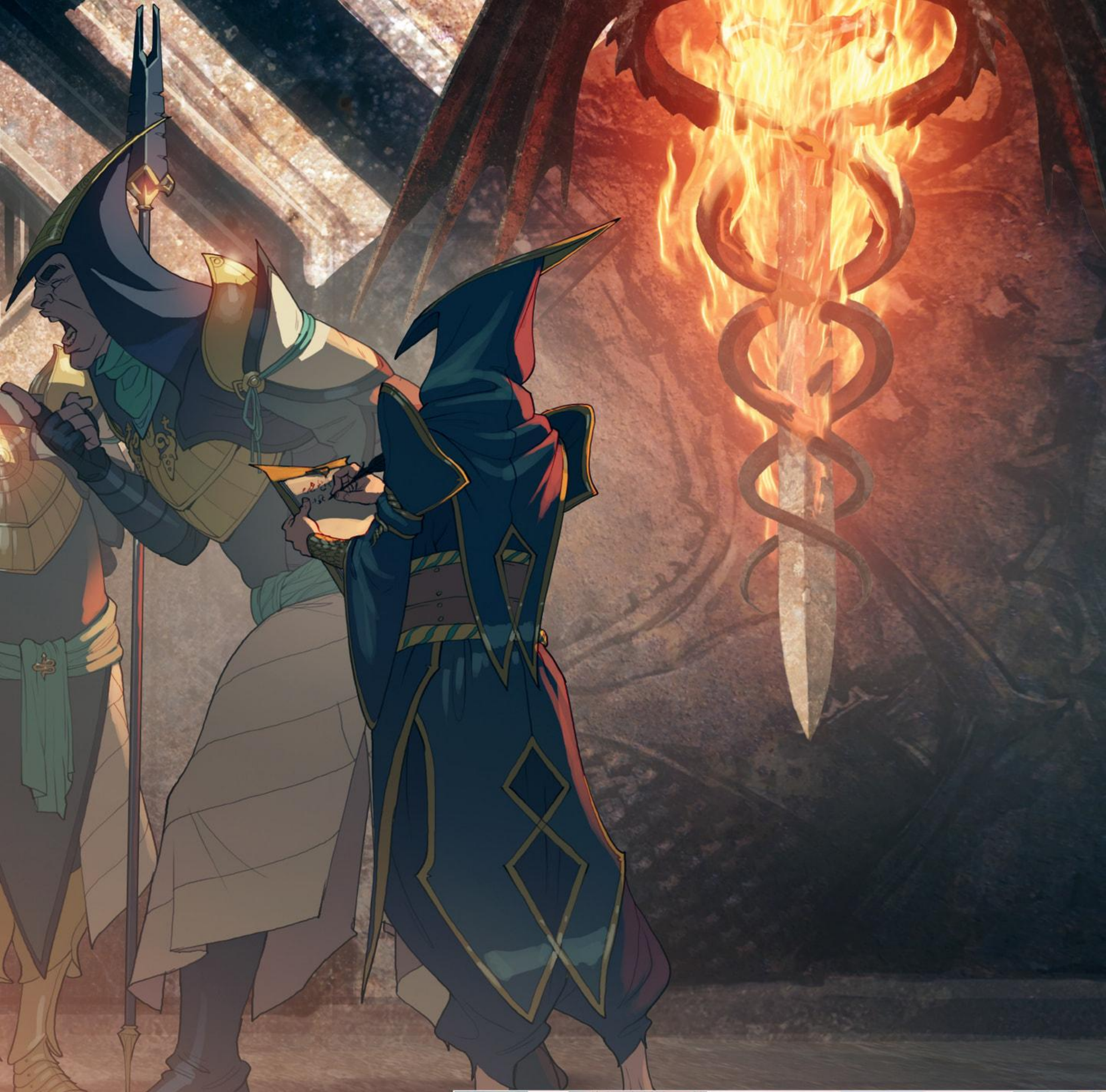
Steal some uniforms and bluff your way past a guard.

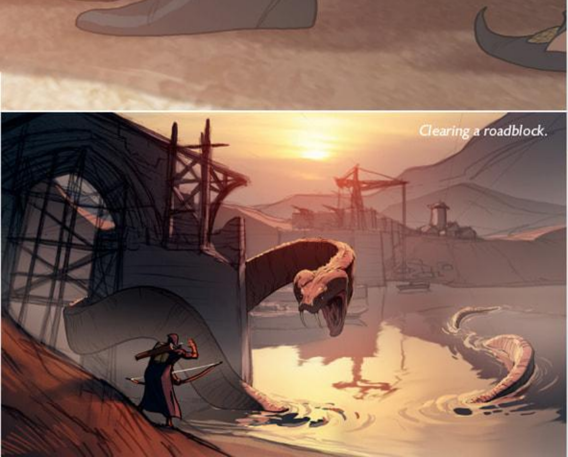


A high-speed aravel chase.

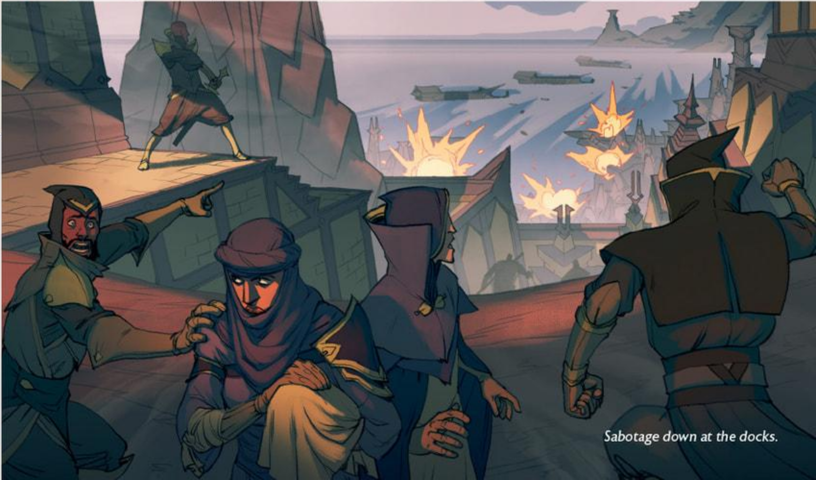


The team using its skills to outwit some bandits.

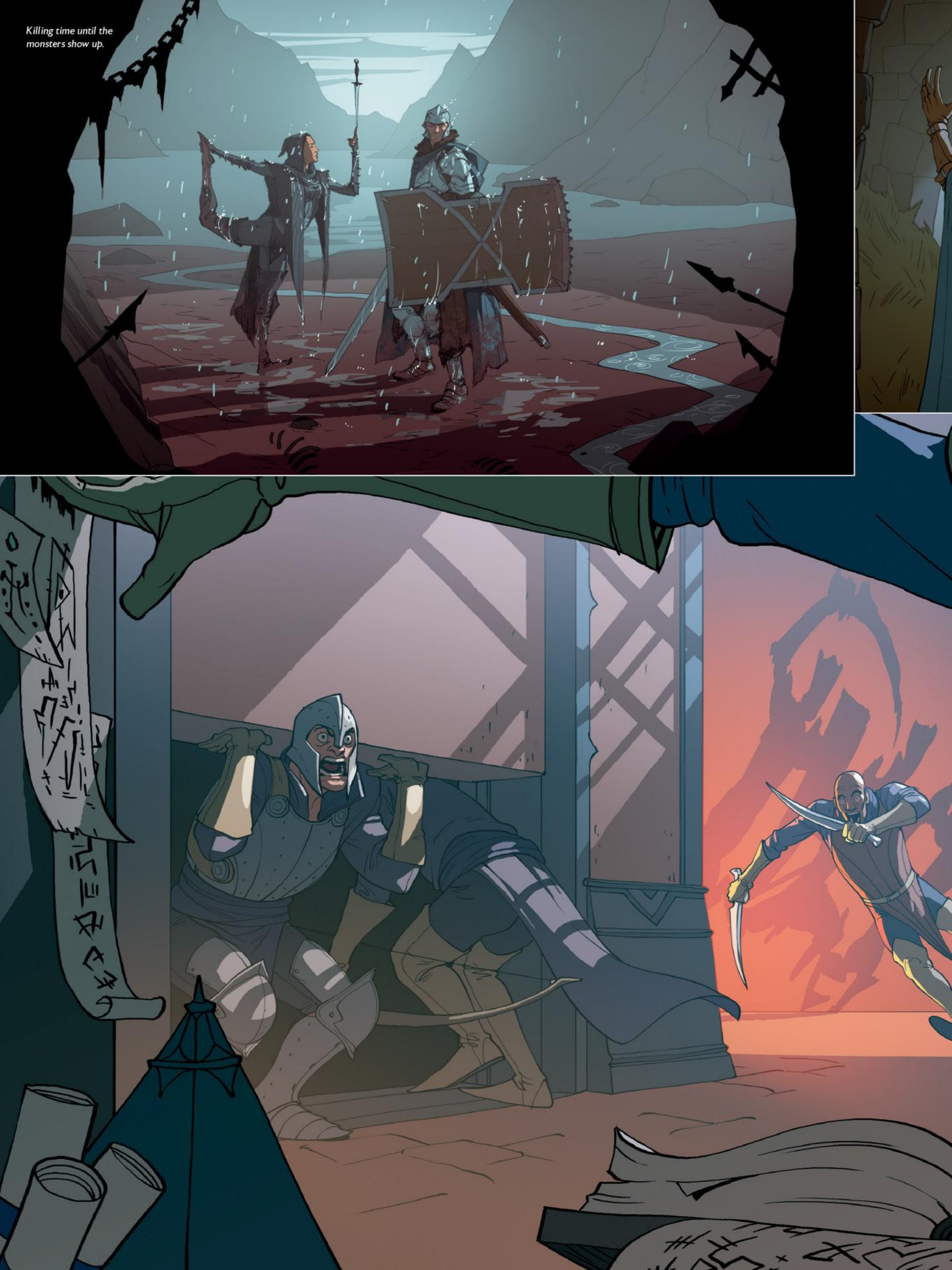




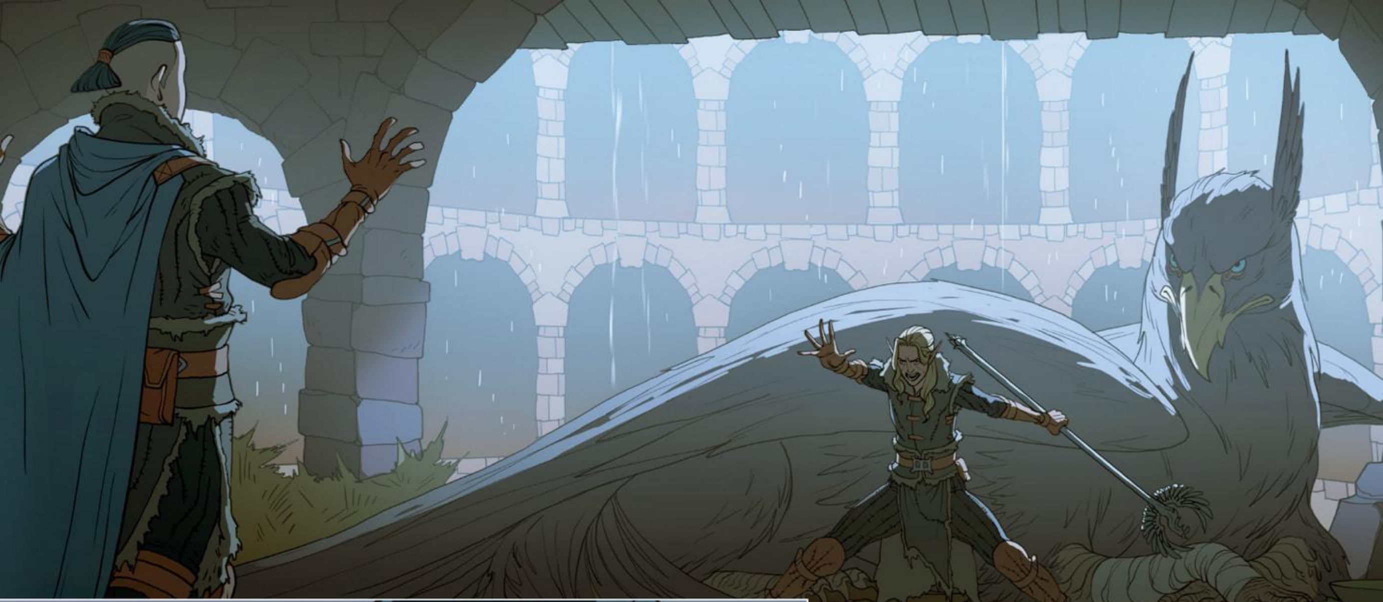
Clearing a roadblock.



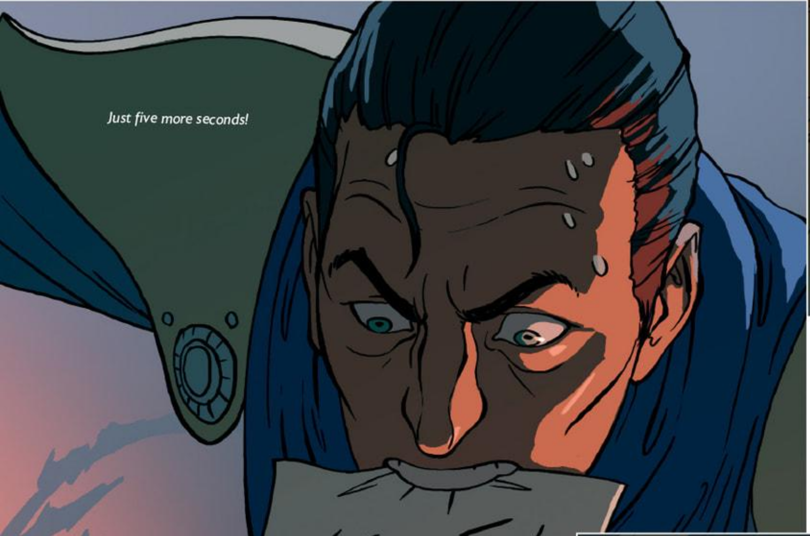
Sabotage down at the docks.



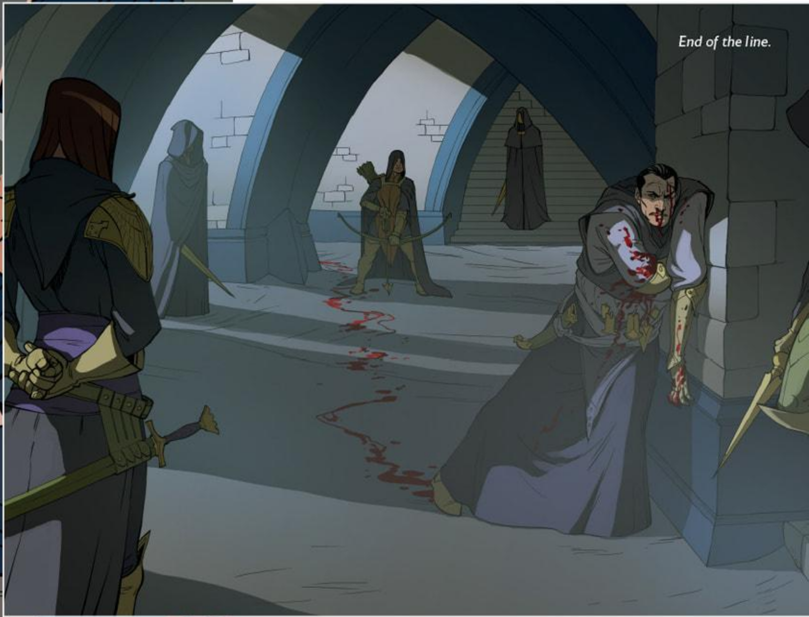
Killing time until the monsters show up.



Discovering the griffon sanctuary.



Just five more seconds!



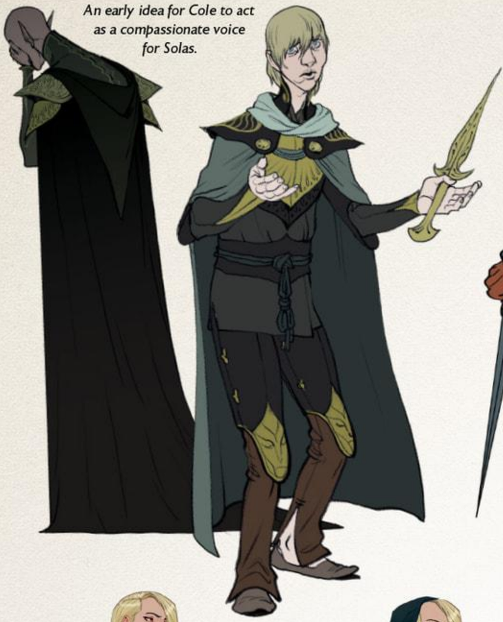
End of the line.

EARLY NPCs

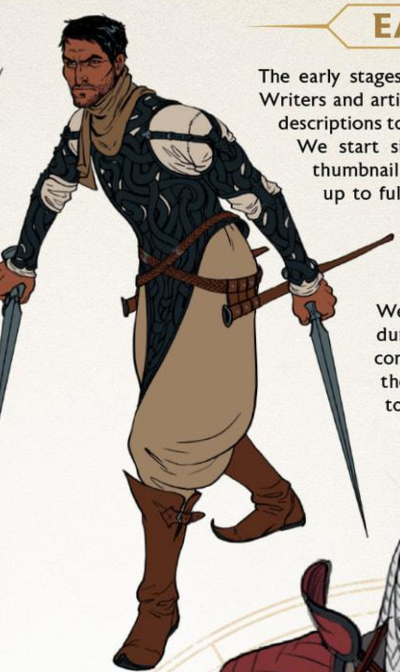
The early stages of character design are exciting. Writers and artists will develop simple sketches or descriptions to start filling up the blank canvas.

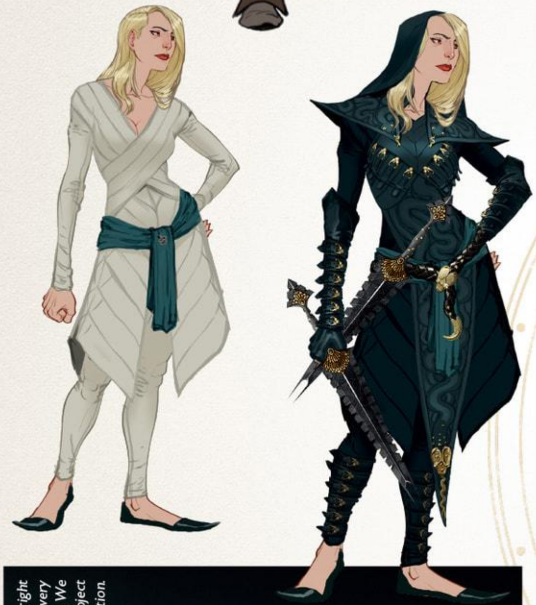
We start simple. If a character works as a thumbnail sketch, they'll work when blown up to full size. It's a great way to keep an eye on shape and color, to make sure they all stand out from one another (an important element on the battlefield).

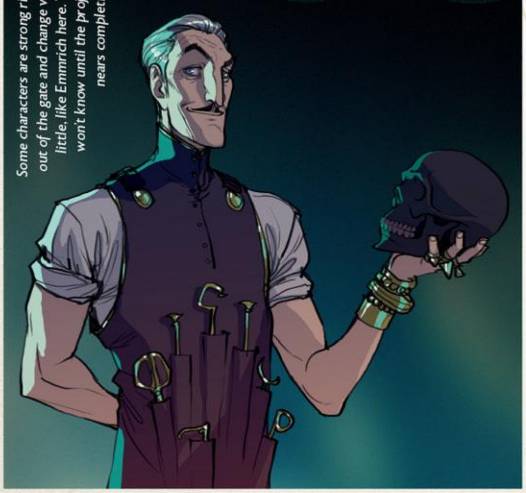
We explore NPCs throughout the duration of a project. They change constantly as we discover more about the project and have new problems to solve.



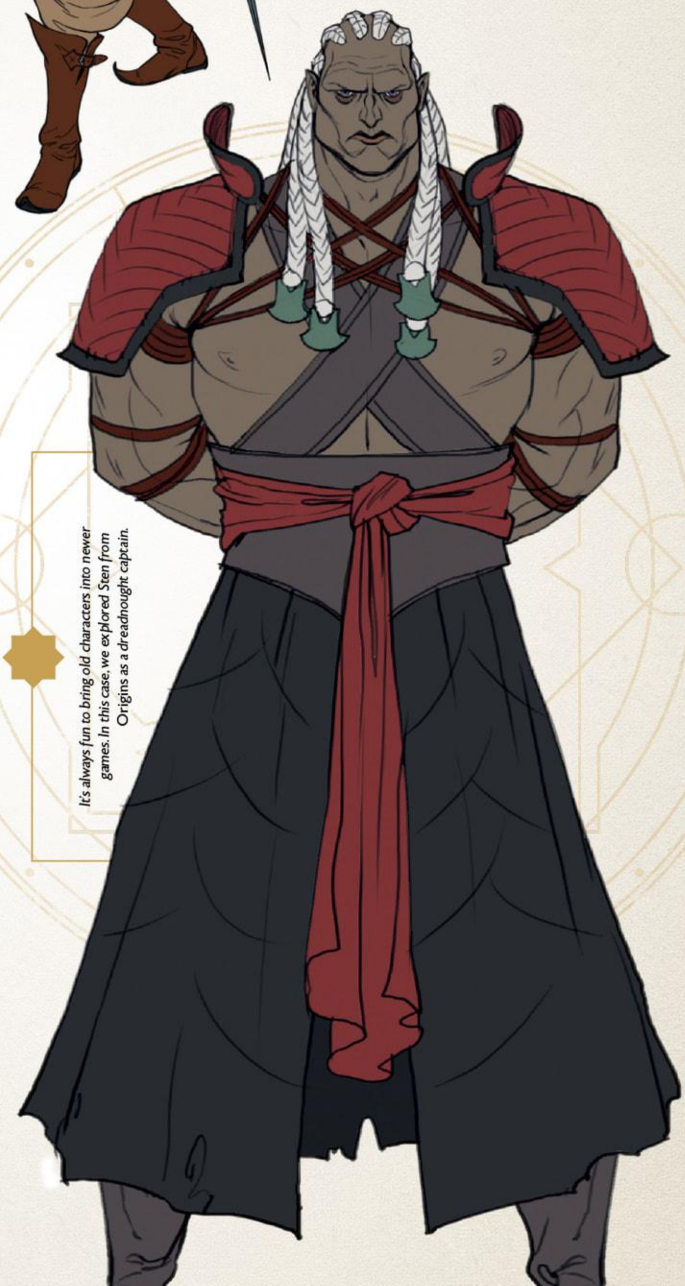
An early idea for Cole to act as a compassionate voice for Solas.



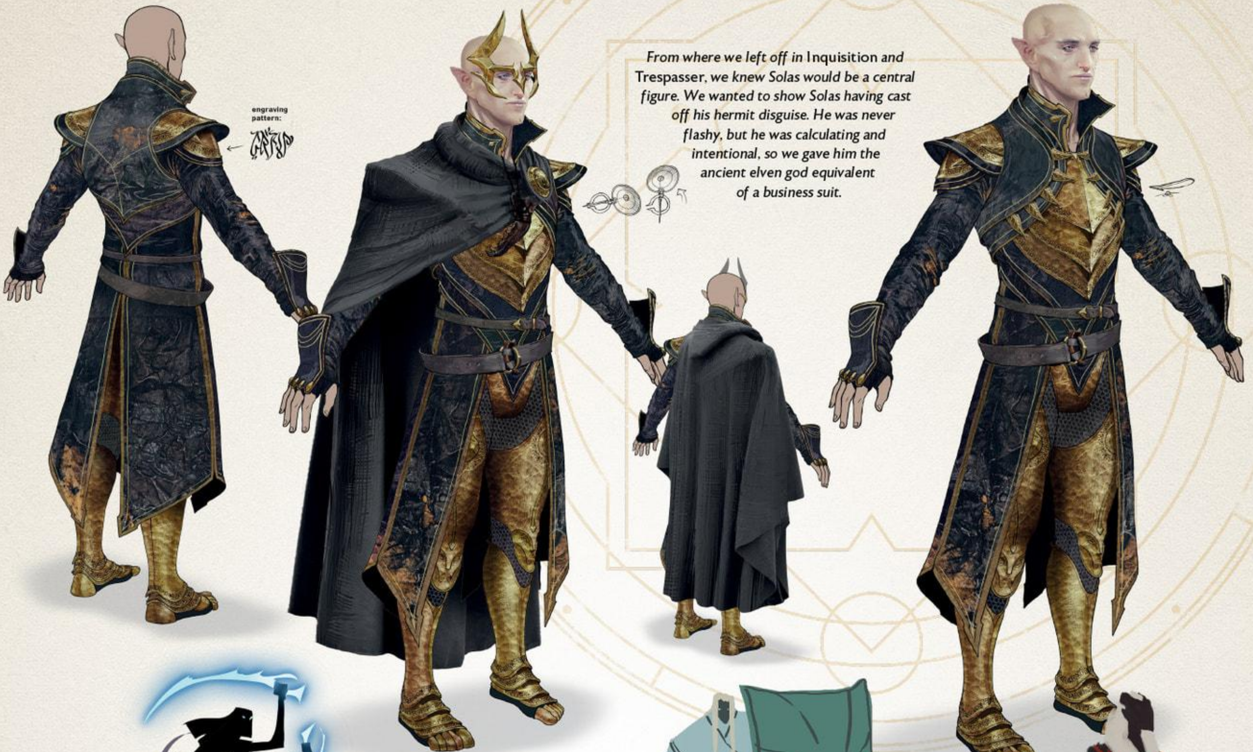




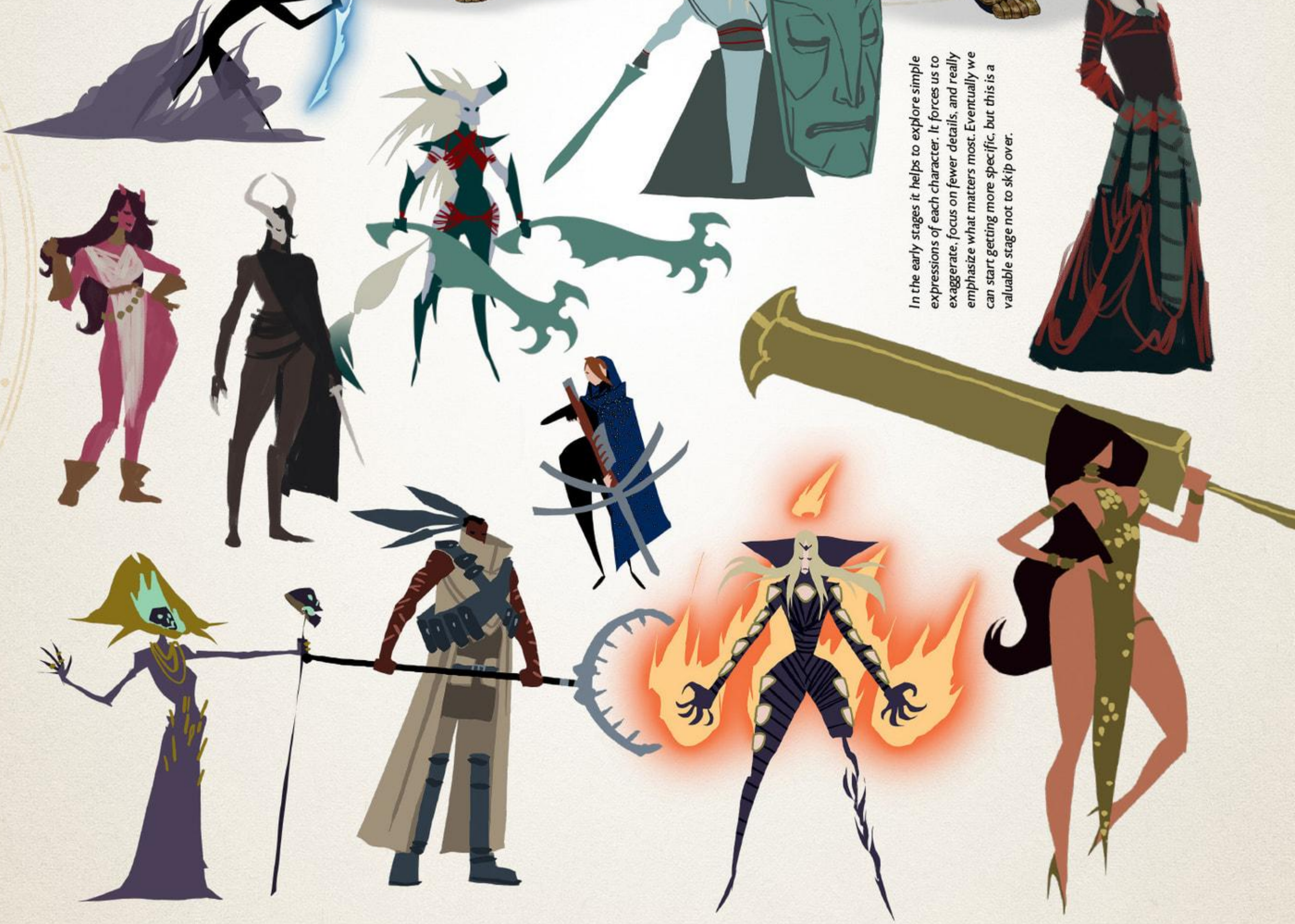
Some characters are strong right out of the gate and change very little, like Emmrich here. We won't know until the project nears completion.



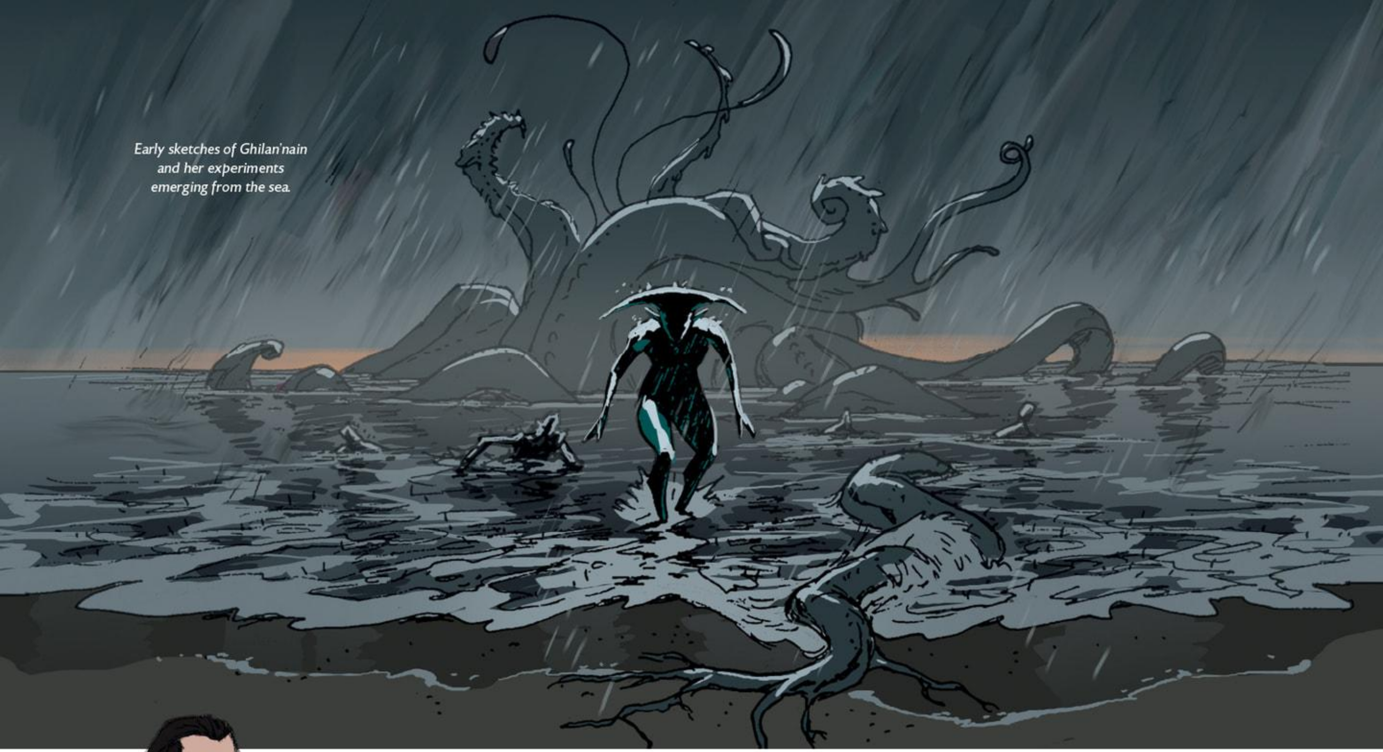
It's always fun to bring old characters into newer games. In this case, we explored Sten from Origins as a dreadnought captain.



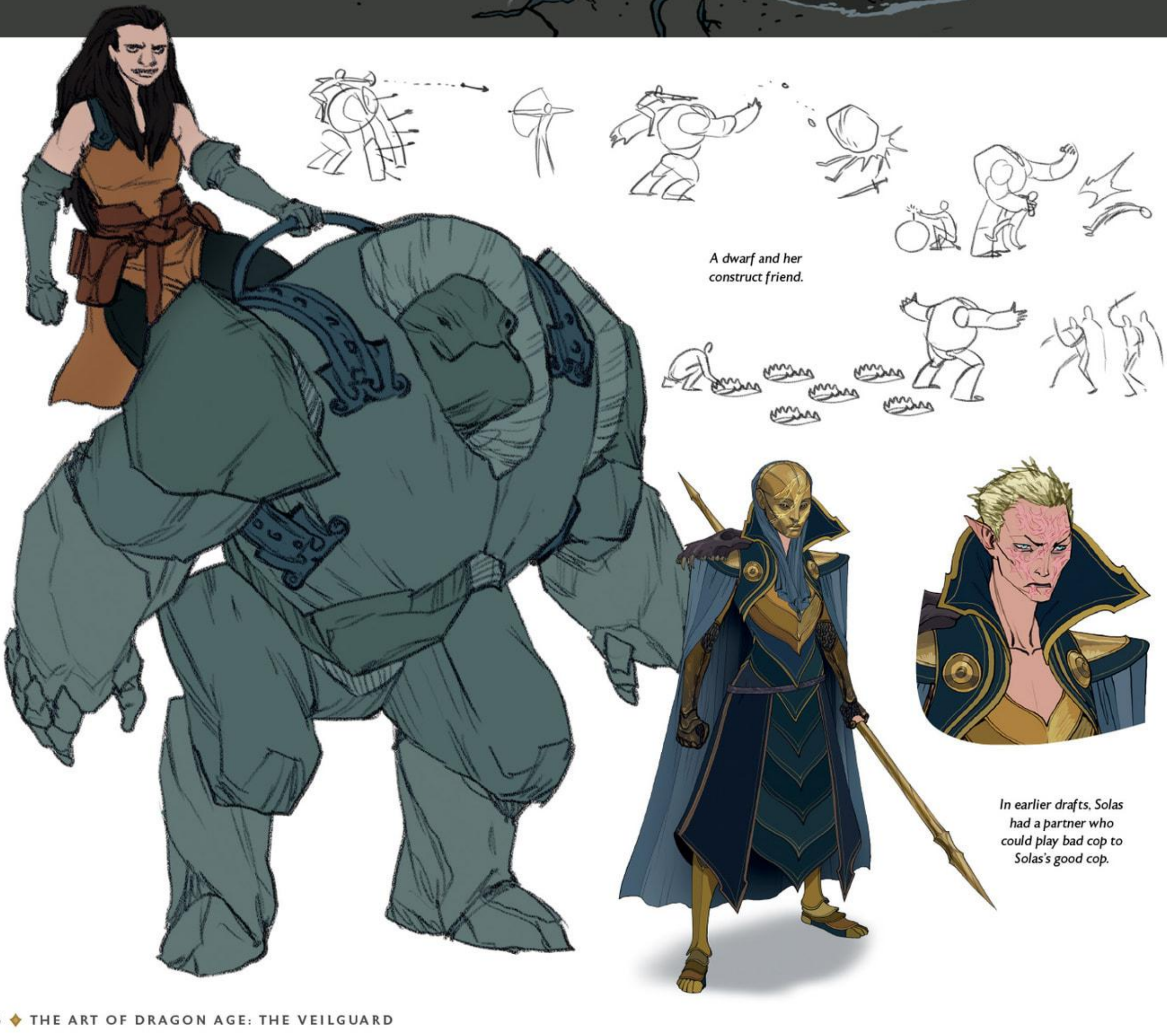
From where we left off in Inquisition *and* Trespasser*, we knew Solas would be a central figure. We wanted to show Solas having cast off his hermit disguise. He was never flashy, but he was calculating and intentional, so we gave him the ancient elven god equivalent of a business suit.*



In the early stages it helps to explore simple expressions of each character. It forces us to exaggerate, focus on fewer details, and really emphasize what matters most. Eventually we can start getting more specific, but this is a valuable stage not to skip over.

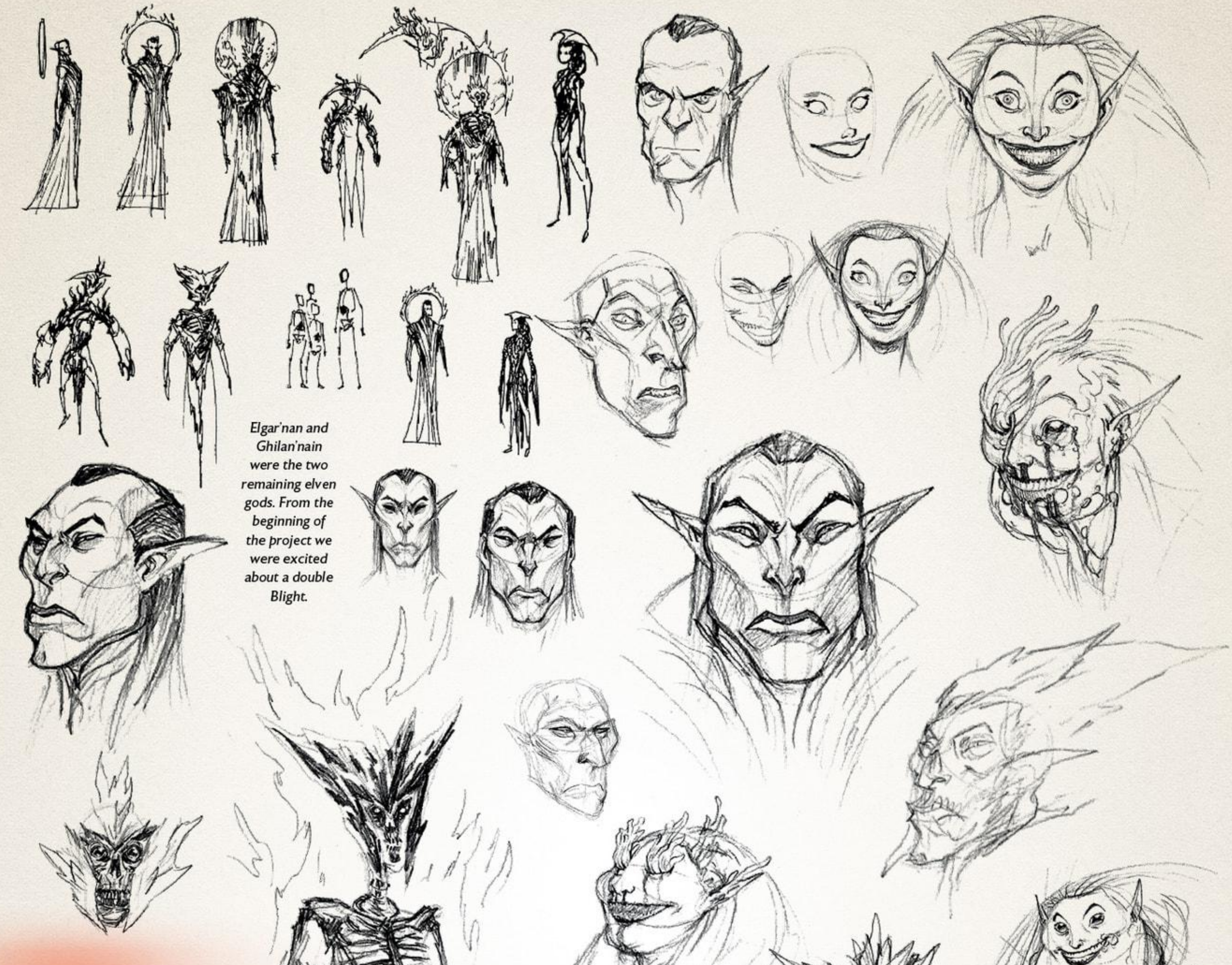


Early sketches of Ghilan'nain and her experiments emerging from the sea.

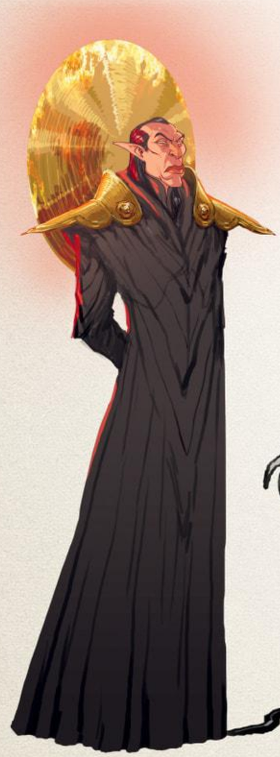


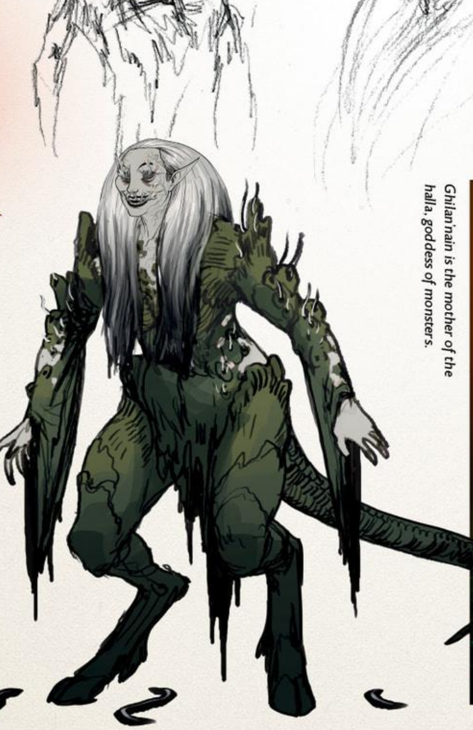
A dwarf and her construct friend.

In earlier drafts, Solas had a partner who could play bad cop to Solas's good cop.

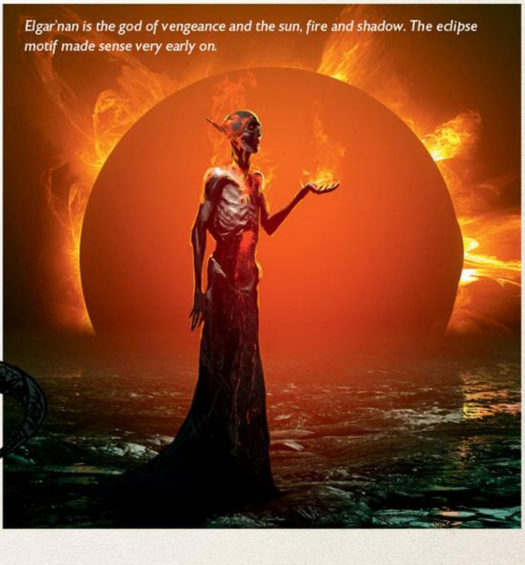


Elgar'nan and Ghilan'nain were the two remaining elven gods. From the beginning of the project we were excited about a double Blight.

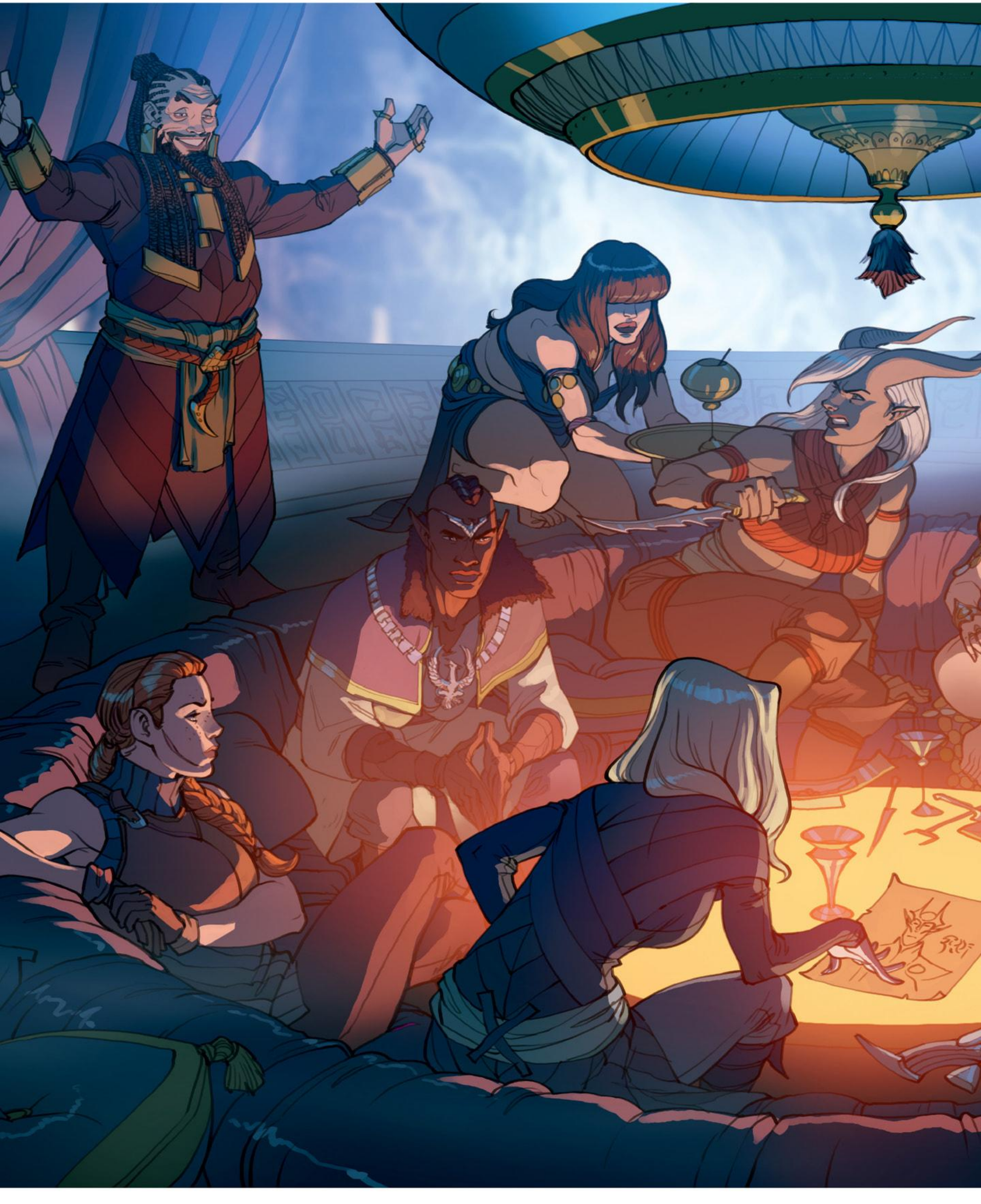


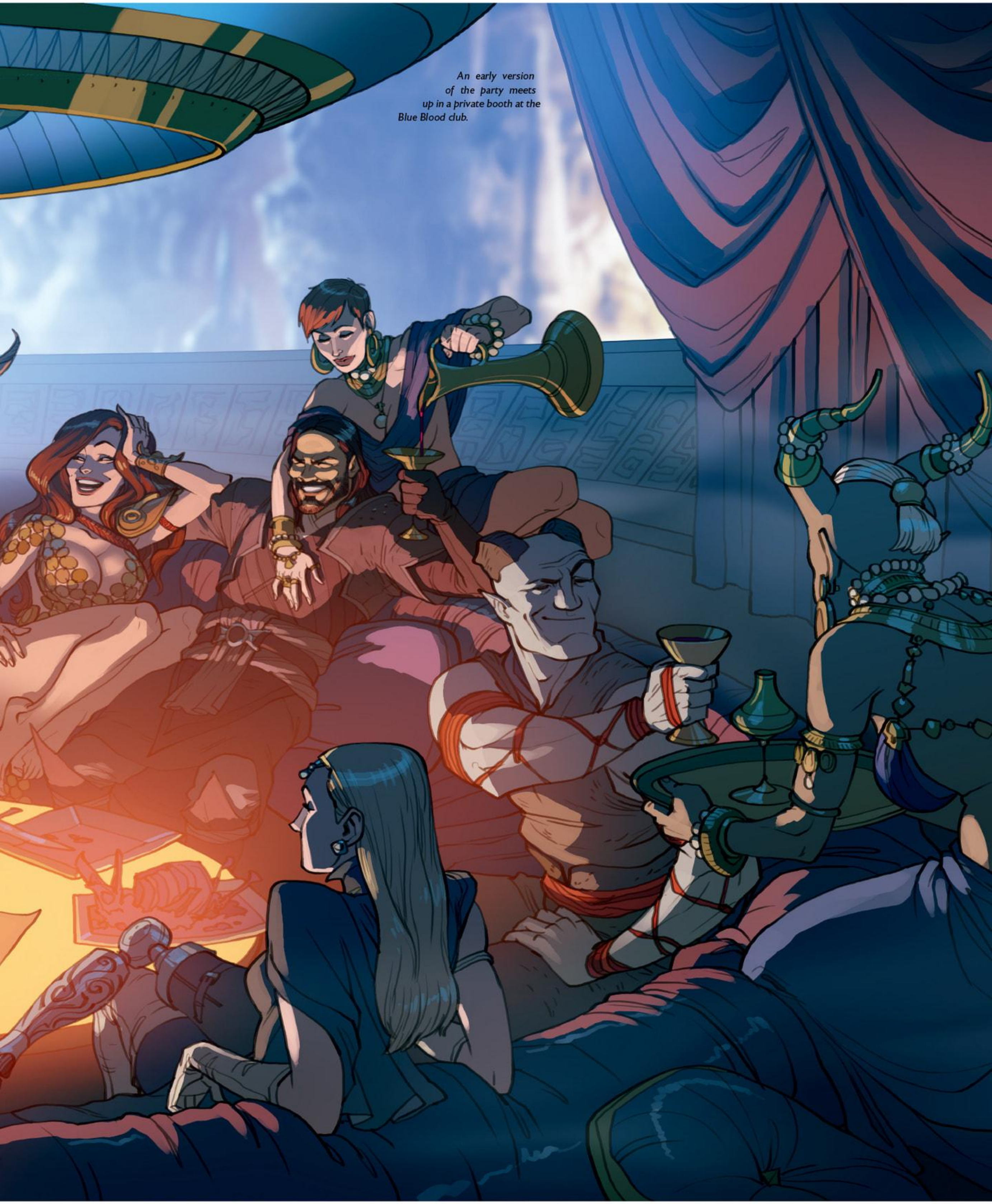


Ghilan'nain is the mother of the halla, goddess of monsters.

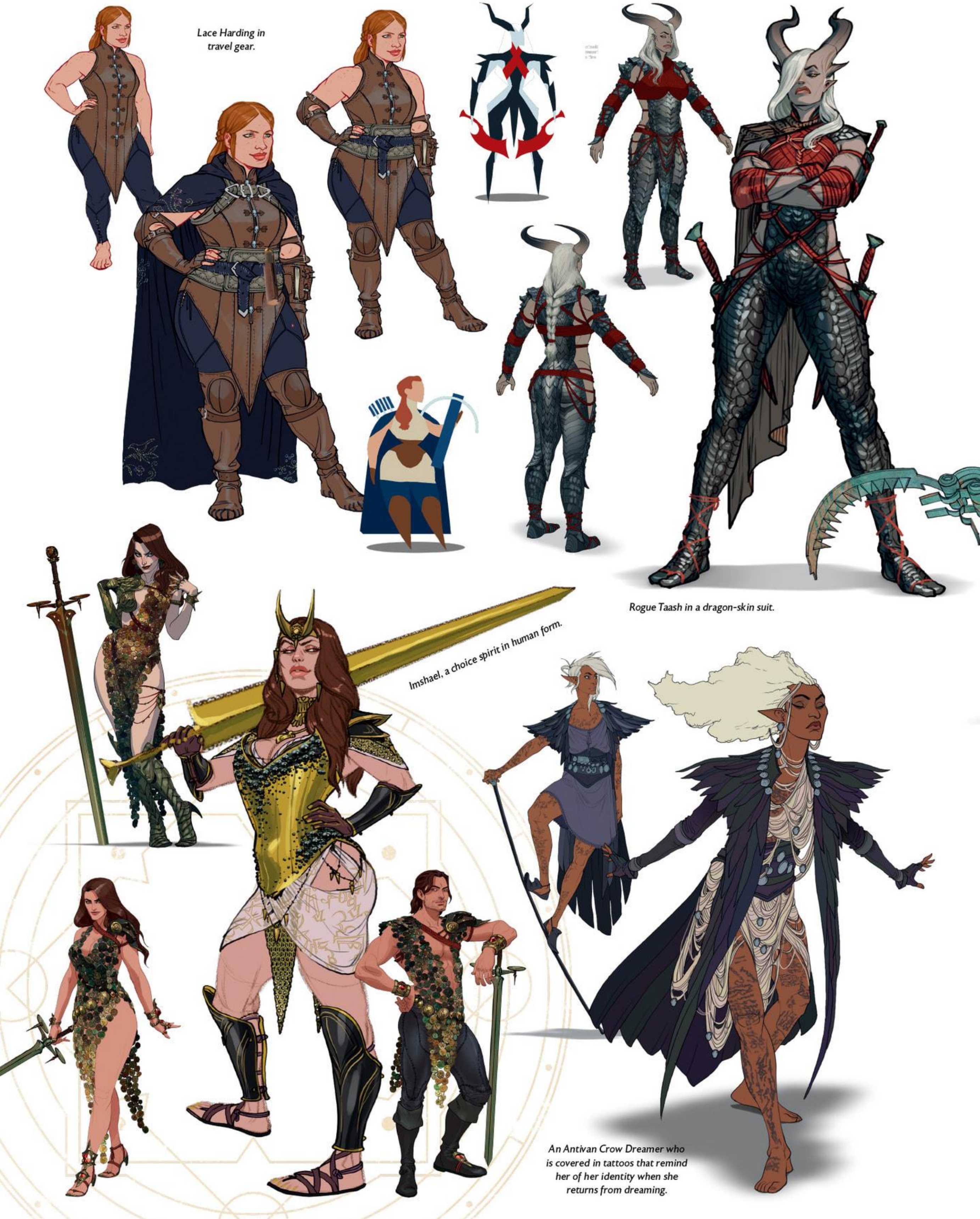


Elgar'nan is the god of vengeance and the sun, fire and shadow. The eclipse motif made sense very early on.





An early version of the party meets up in a private booth at the Blue Blood club.

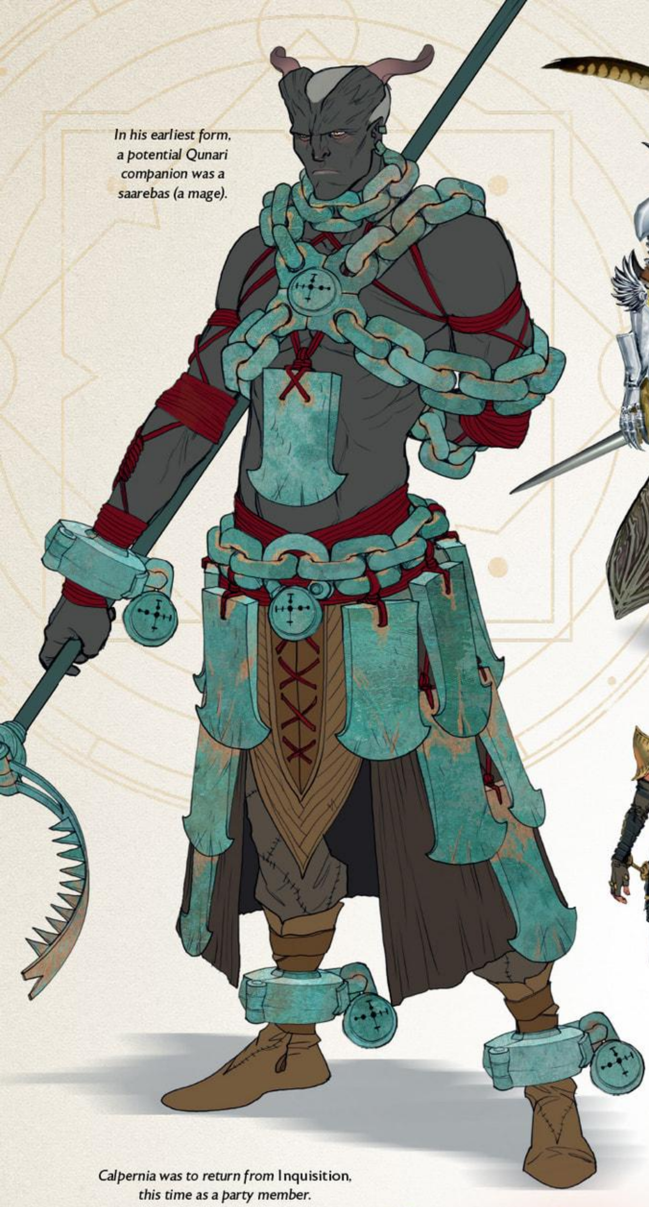


Lace Harding in travel gear.

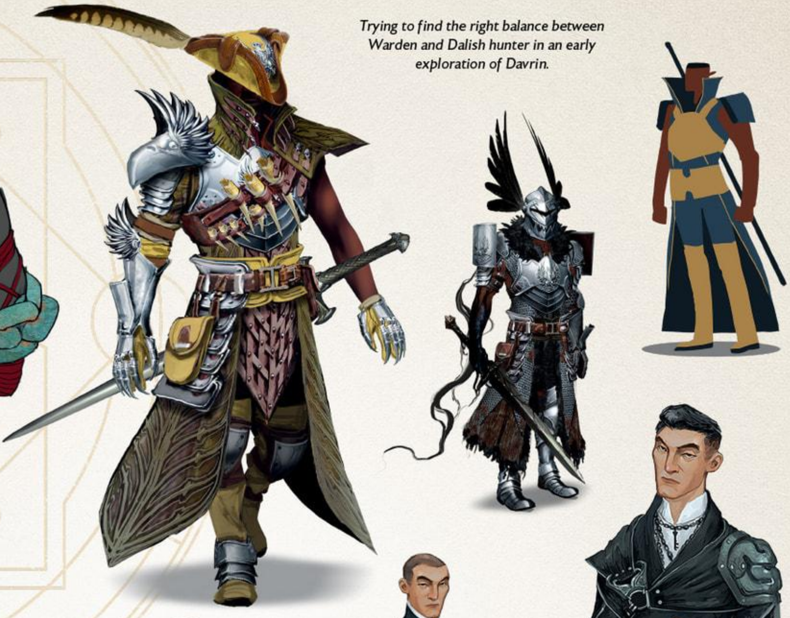
Rogue Taash in a dragon-skin suit.

Imshael, a choice spirit in human form.

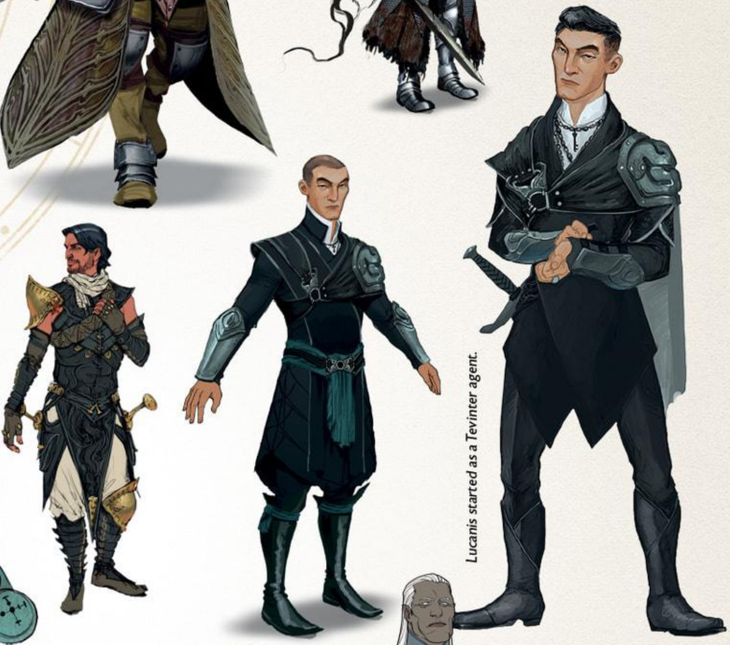
An Antivan Crow Dreamer who is covered in tattoos that remind her of her identity when she returns from dreaming.



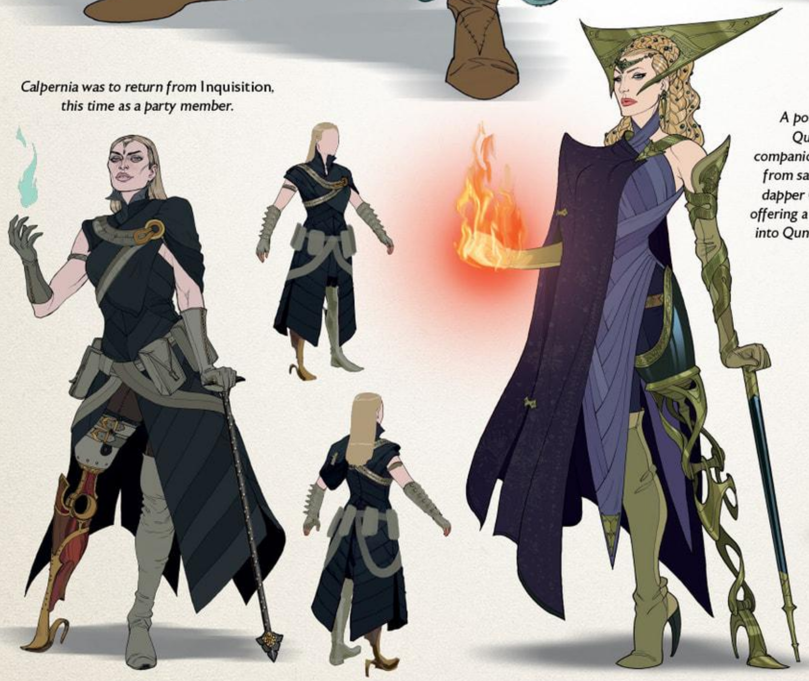
In his earliest form, a potential Qunari companion was a saarebas (a mage).



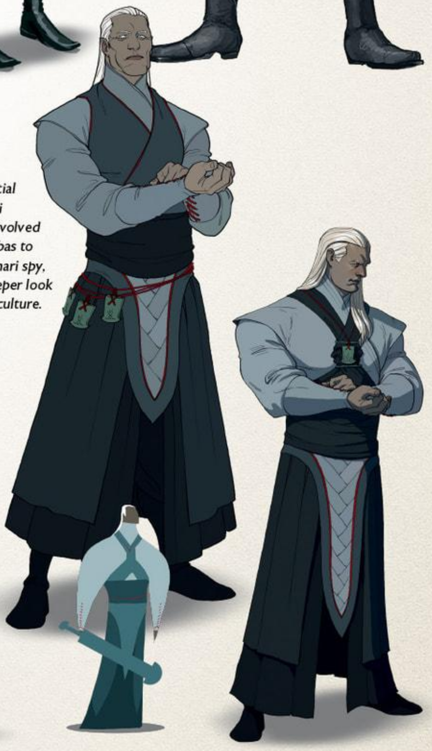
Trying to find the right balance between Warden and Dalish hunter in an early exploration of Davrin.



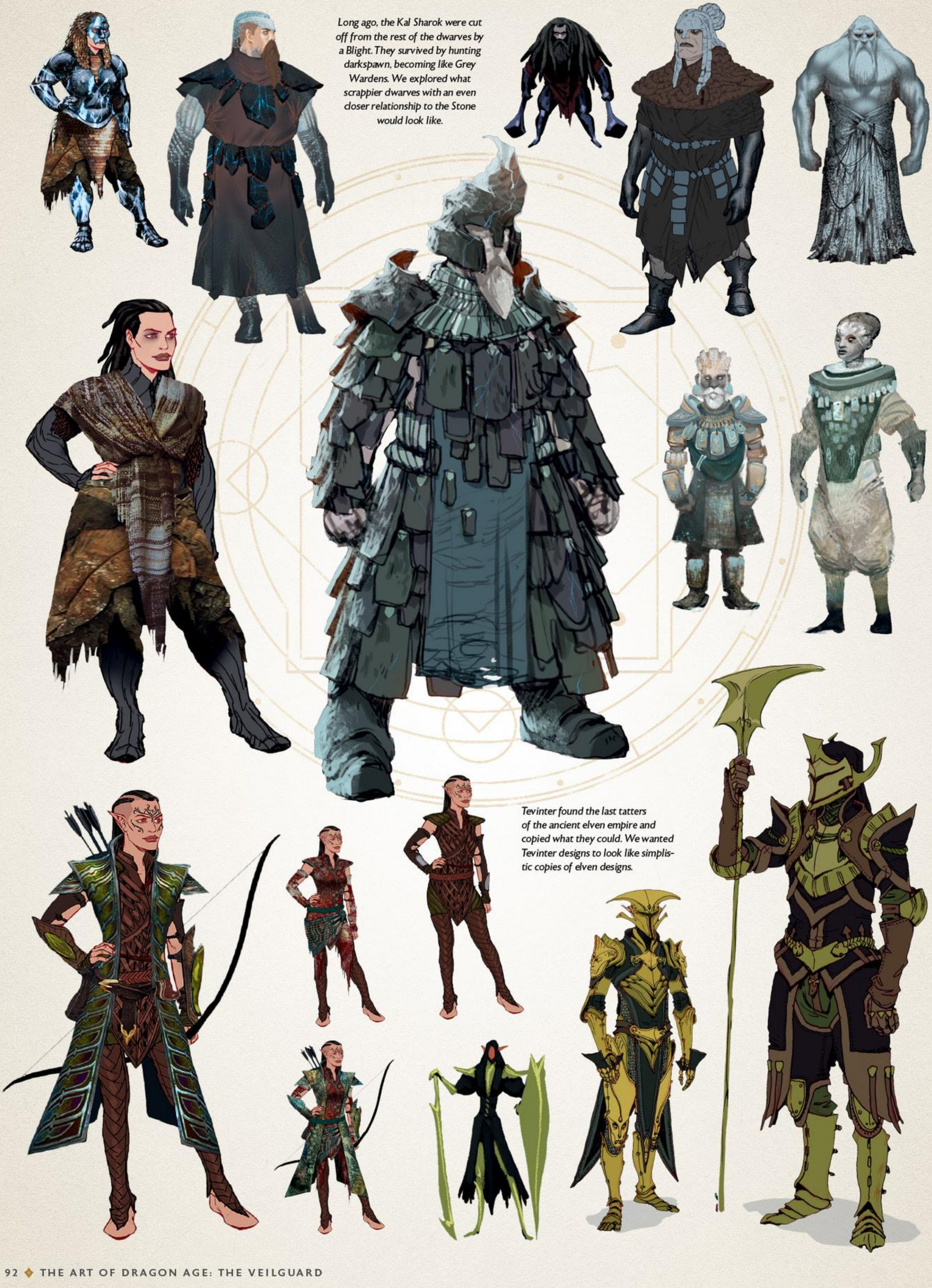
Lucanis started as a Tevinter agent.



Calpernia was to return from Inquisition, this time as a party member.



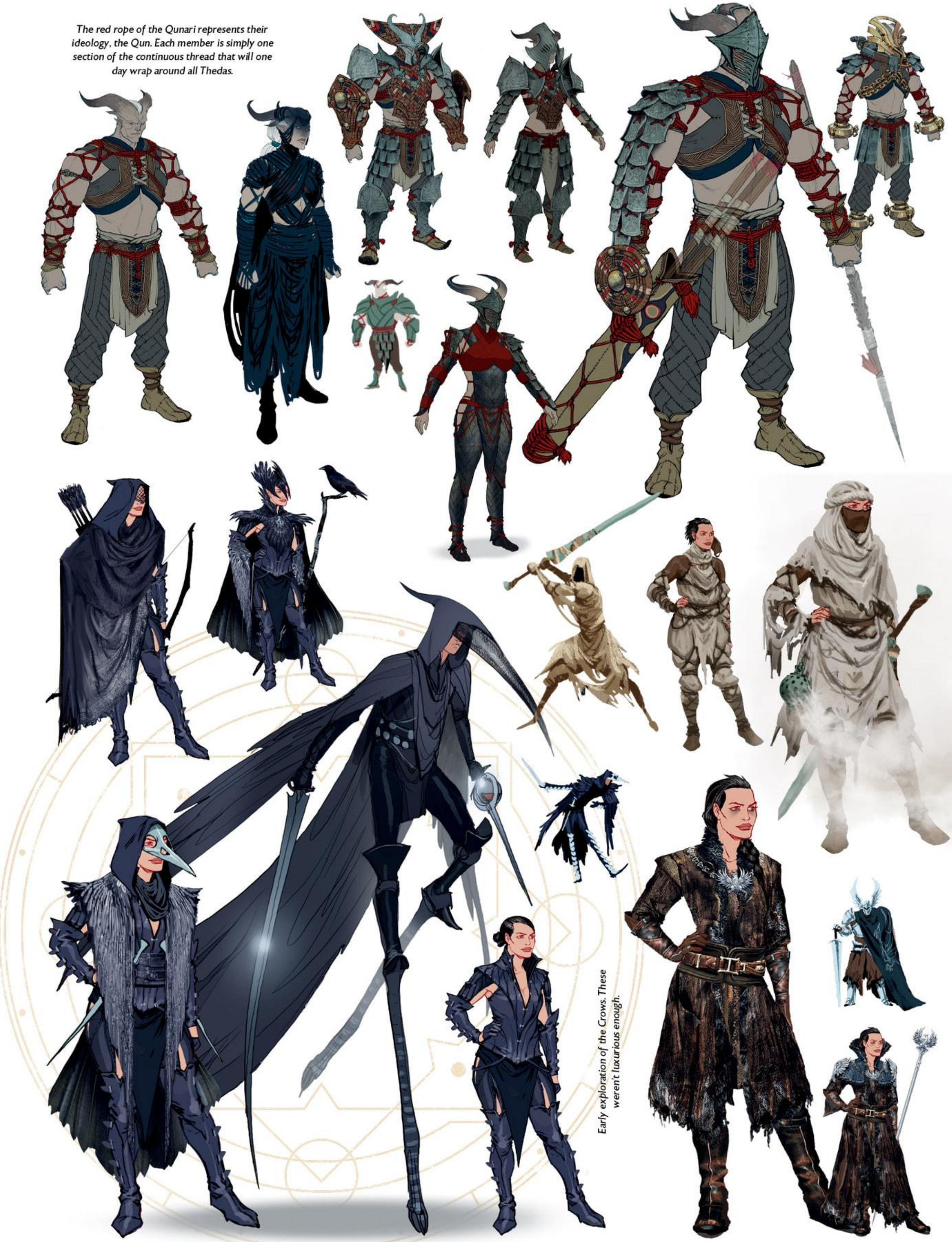
A potential Qunari companion evolved from saarebas to dapper Qunari spy, offering a deeper look into Qunari culture.



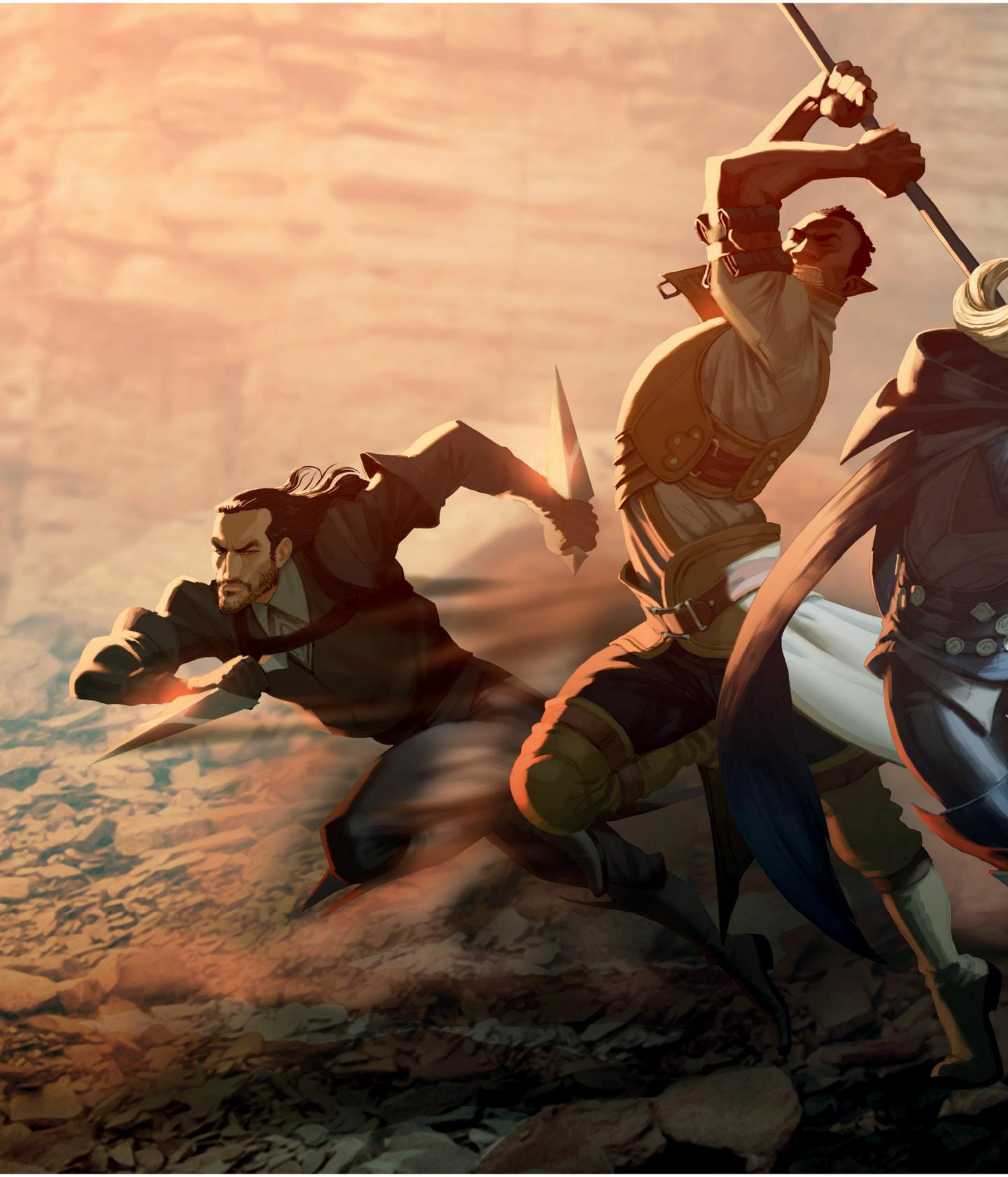
Long ago, the Kal Sharok were cut off from the rest of the dwarves by a Blight. They survived by hunting darkspawn, becoming like Grey Wardens. We explored what scrappier dwarves with an even closer relationship to the Stone would look like.

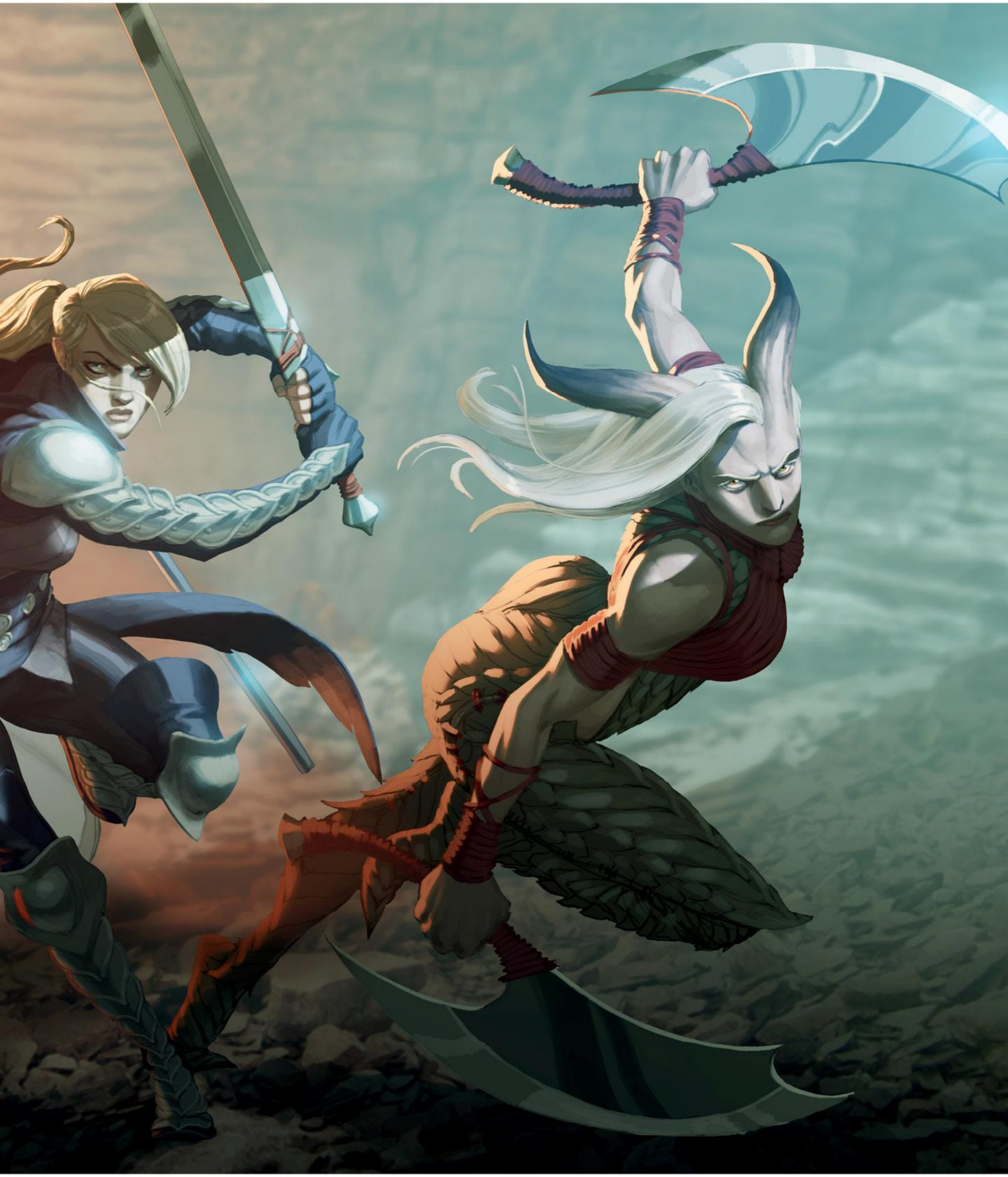
Tevinter found the last tatters of the ancient elven empire and copied what they could. We wanted Tevinter designs to look like simplistic copies of elven designs.

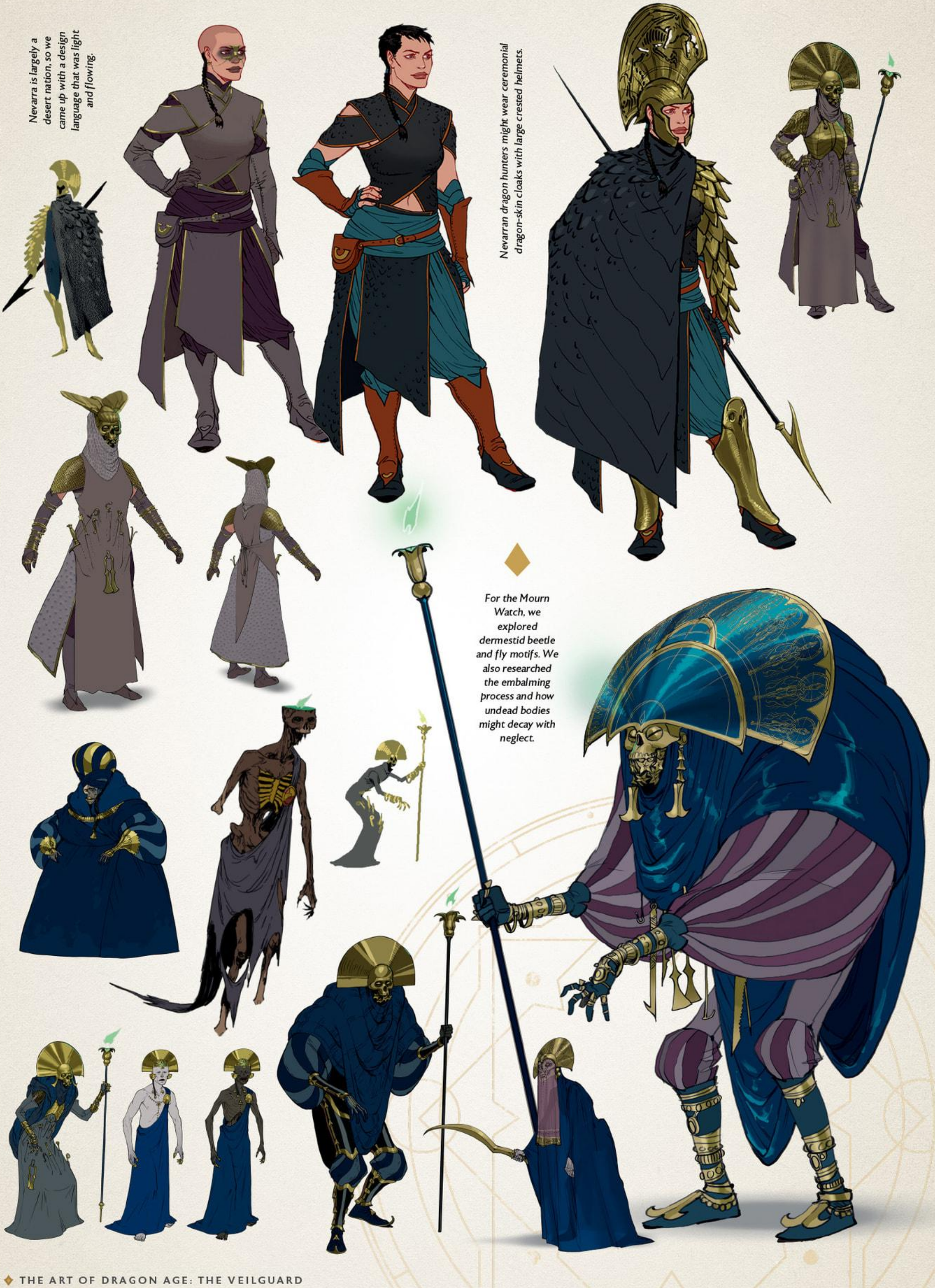
The red rope of the Qunari represents their ideology, the Qun. Each member is simply one section of the continuous thread that will one day wrap around all Thedas.



Early exploration of the Crows. These weren't luxurious enough.





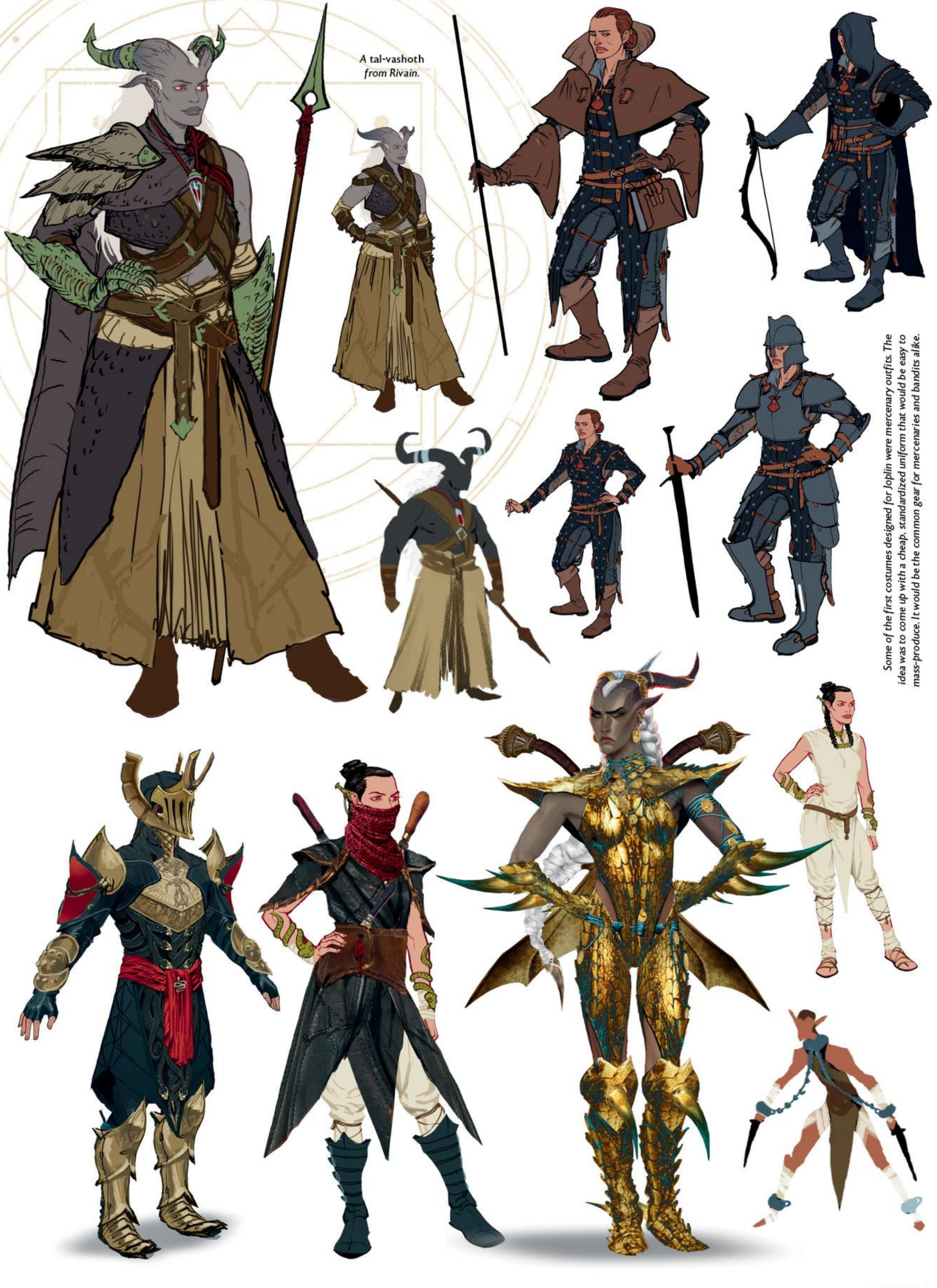


Nevarra is largely a desert nation, so we came up with a design language that was light and flowing.

Nevarran dragon hunters might wear ceremonial dragon-skin cloaks with large crested helmets.

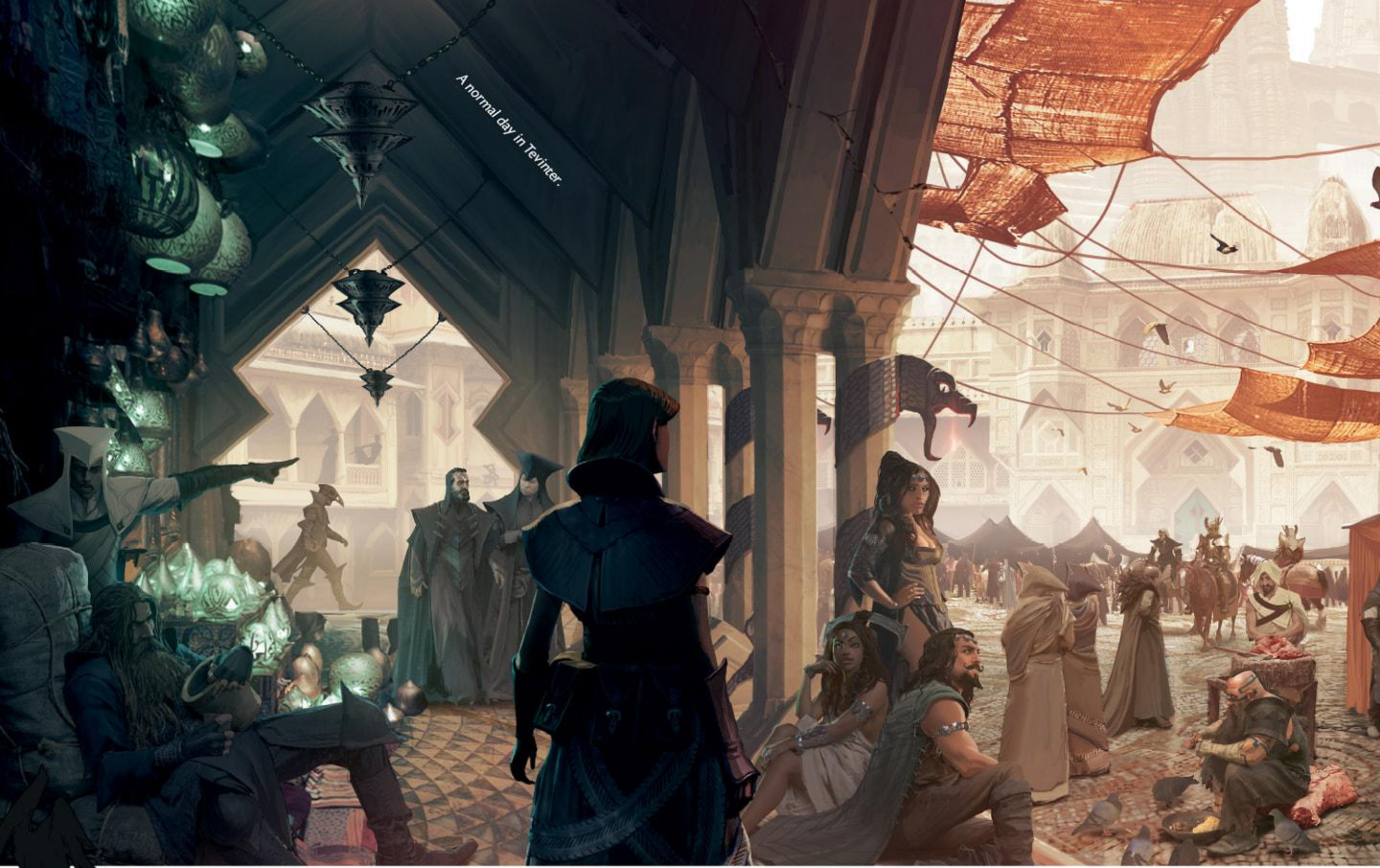
◆

For the Mourn Watch, we explored dermestid beetle and fly motifs. We also researched the embalming process and how undead bodies might decay with neglect.

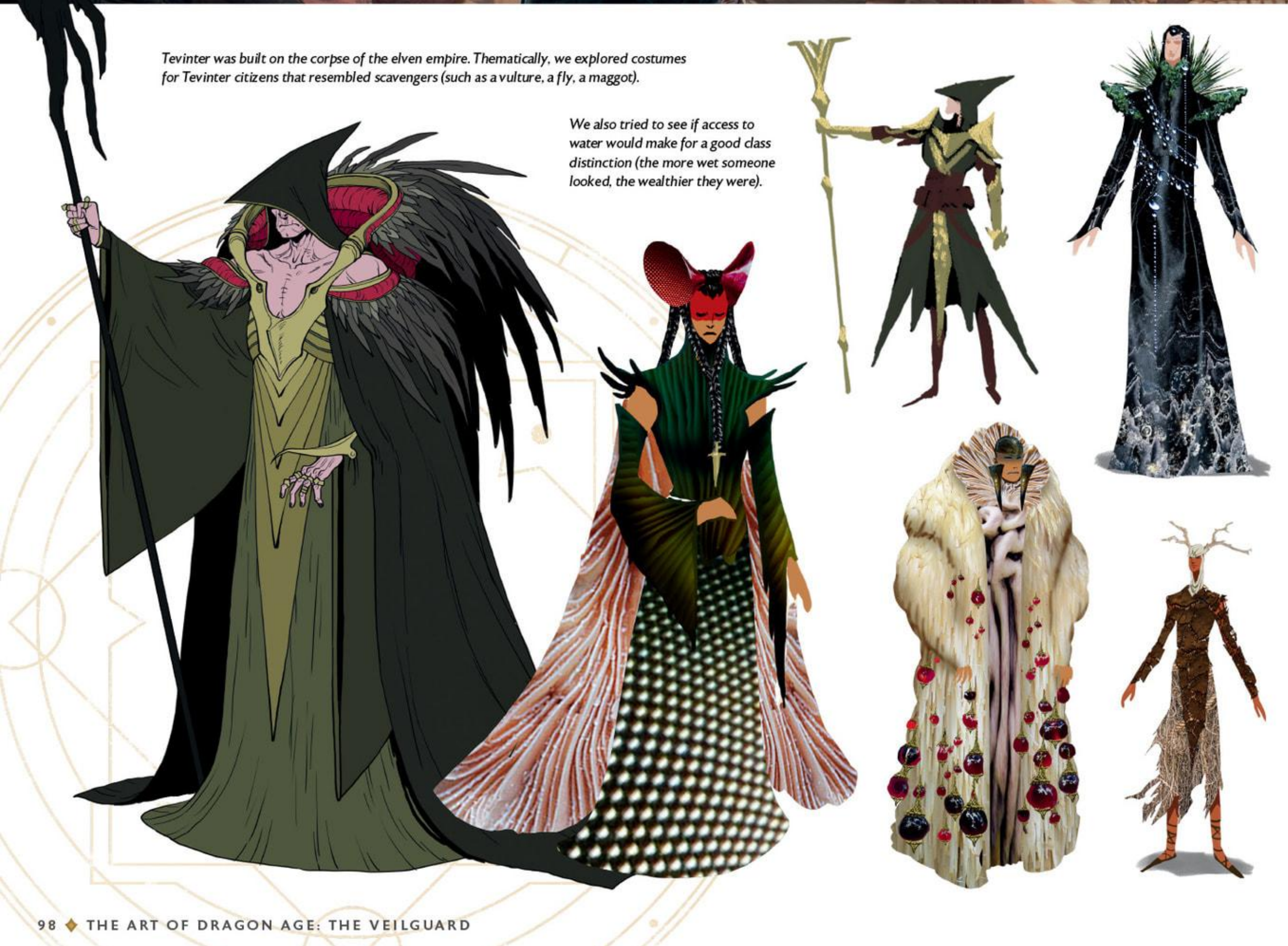


A tal-vashoth from Rivain.

Some of the first costumes designed for Joplin were mercenary outfits. The idea was to come up with a cheap, standardized uniform that would be easy to mass-produce. It would be the common gear for mercenaries and bandits alike.

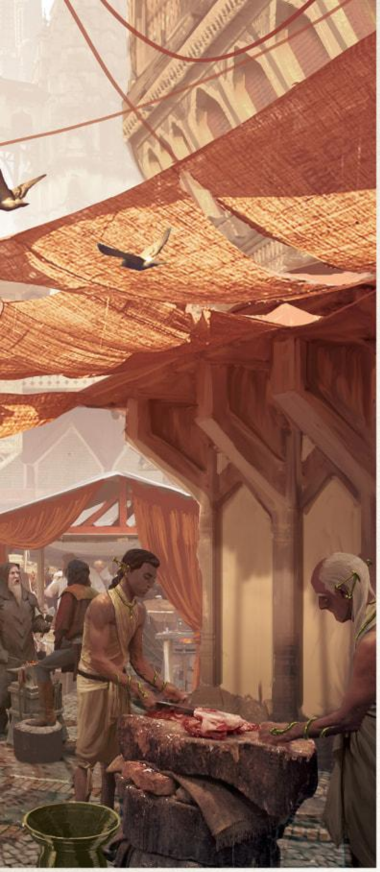


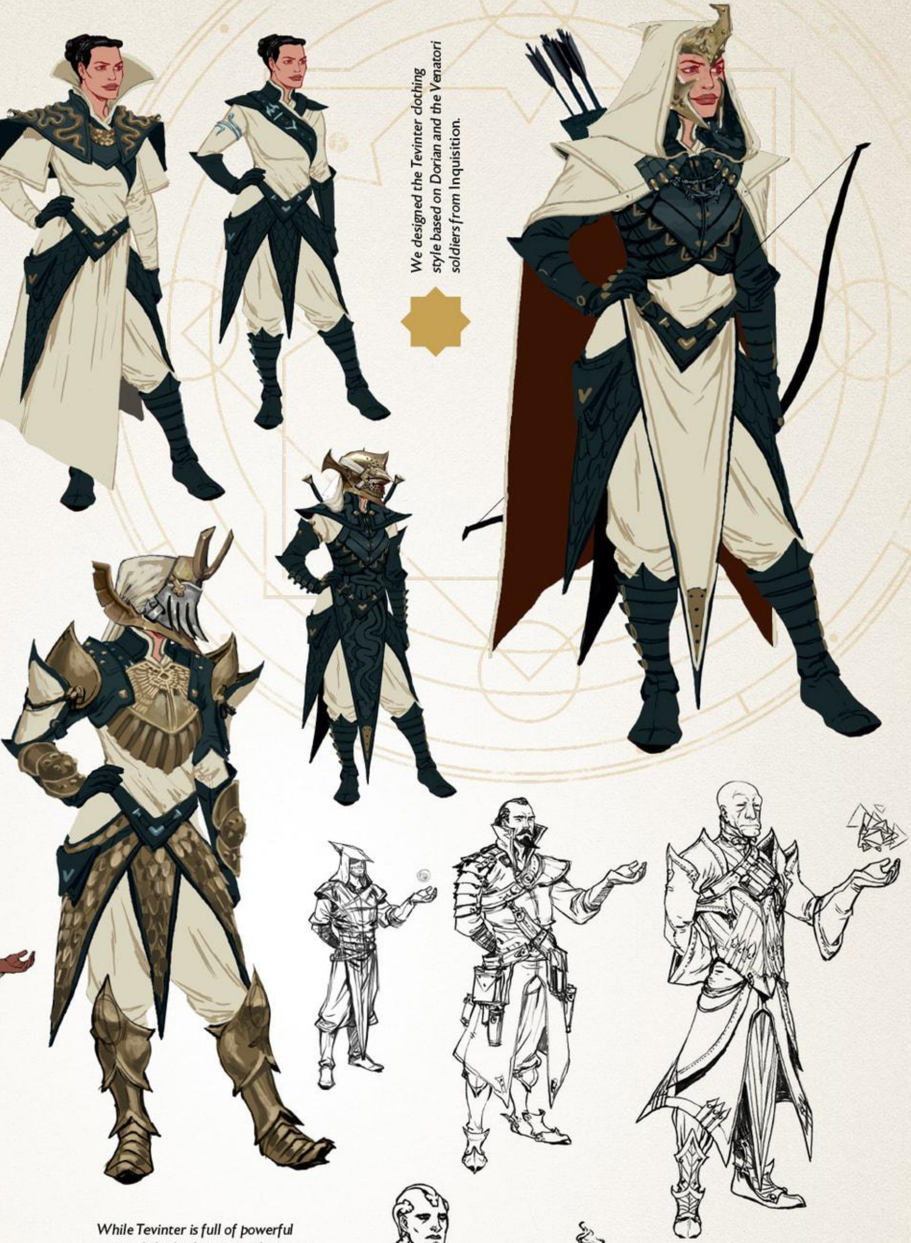
A normal day in Tevinter.



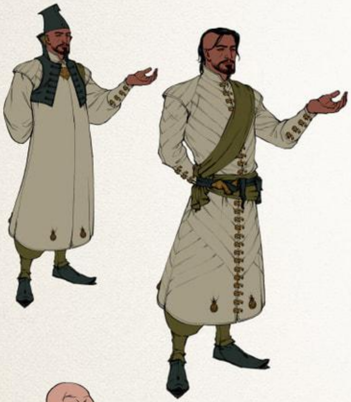
Tevinter was built on the corpse of the elven empire. Thematically, we explored costumes for Tevinter citizens that resembled scavengers (such as a vulture, a fly, a maggot).

We also tried to see if access to water would make for a good class distinction (the more wet someone looked, the wealthier they were).

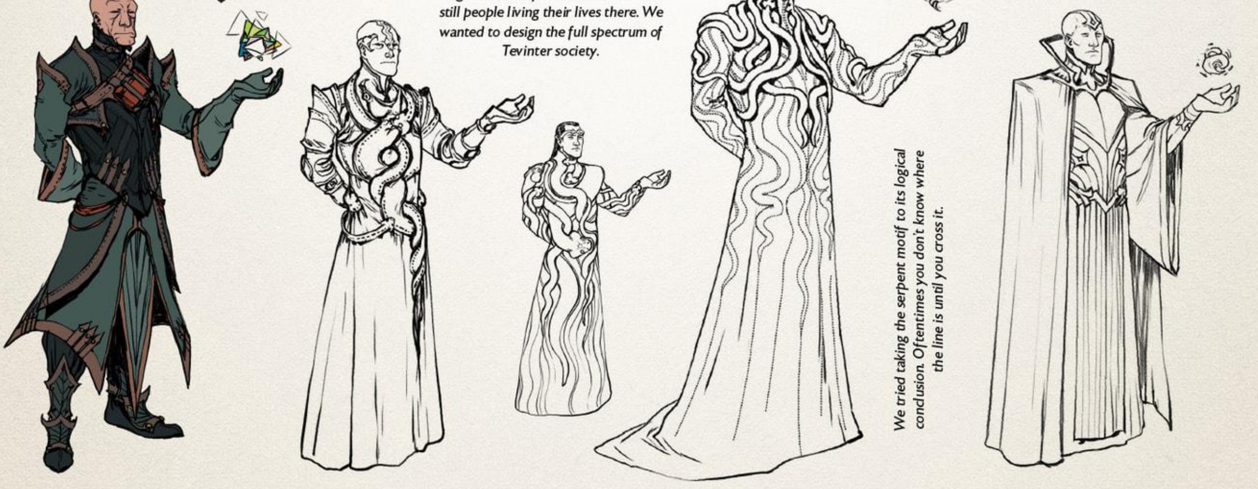




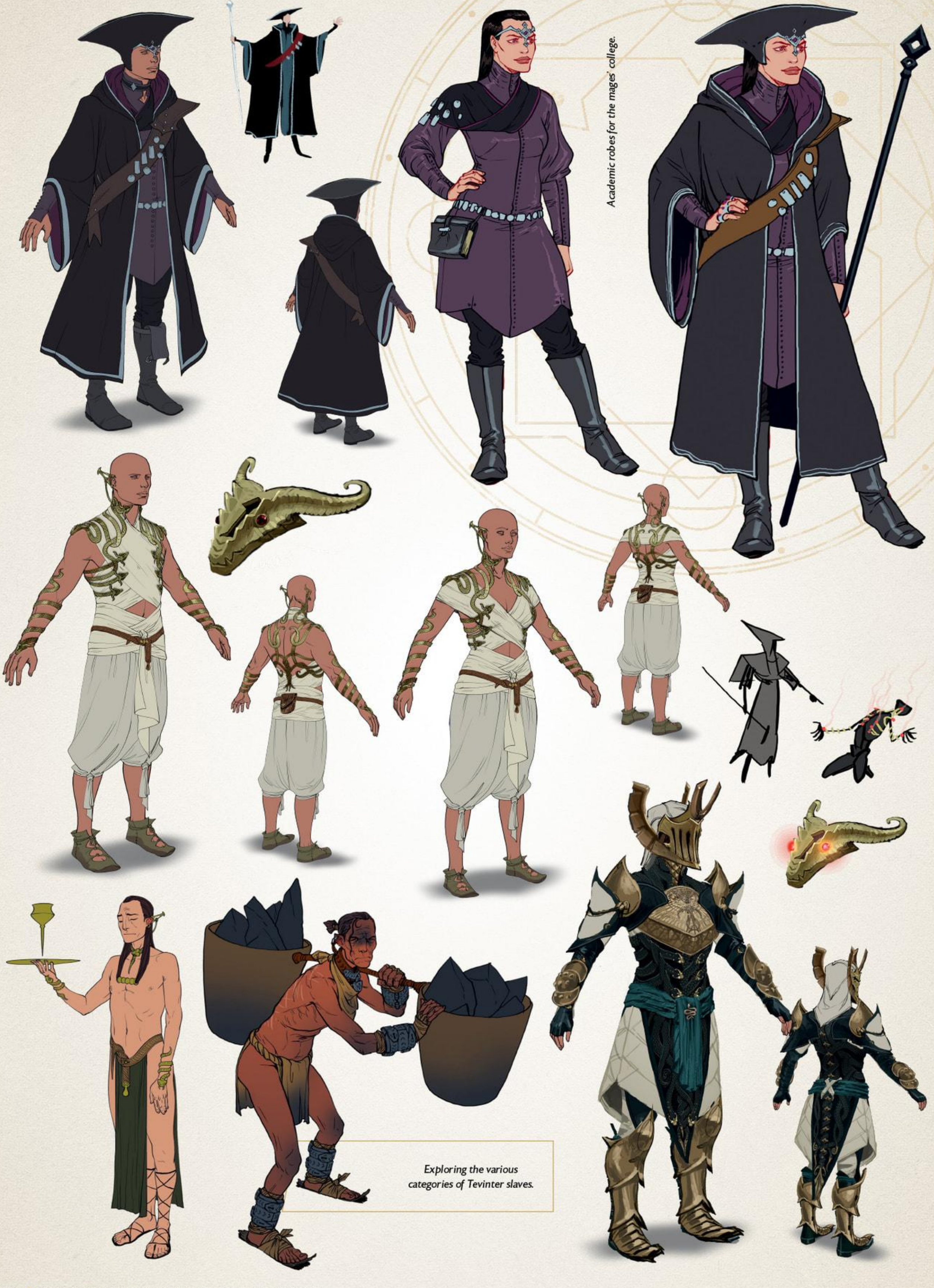
We designed the Tevinter clothing style based on Dorian and the Venatori soldiers from Inquisition.



While Tevinter is full of powerful mages and shady characters, there are still people living their lives there. We wanted to design the full spectrum of Tevinter society.



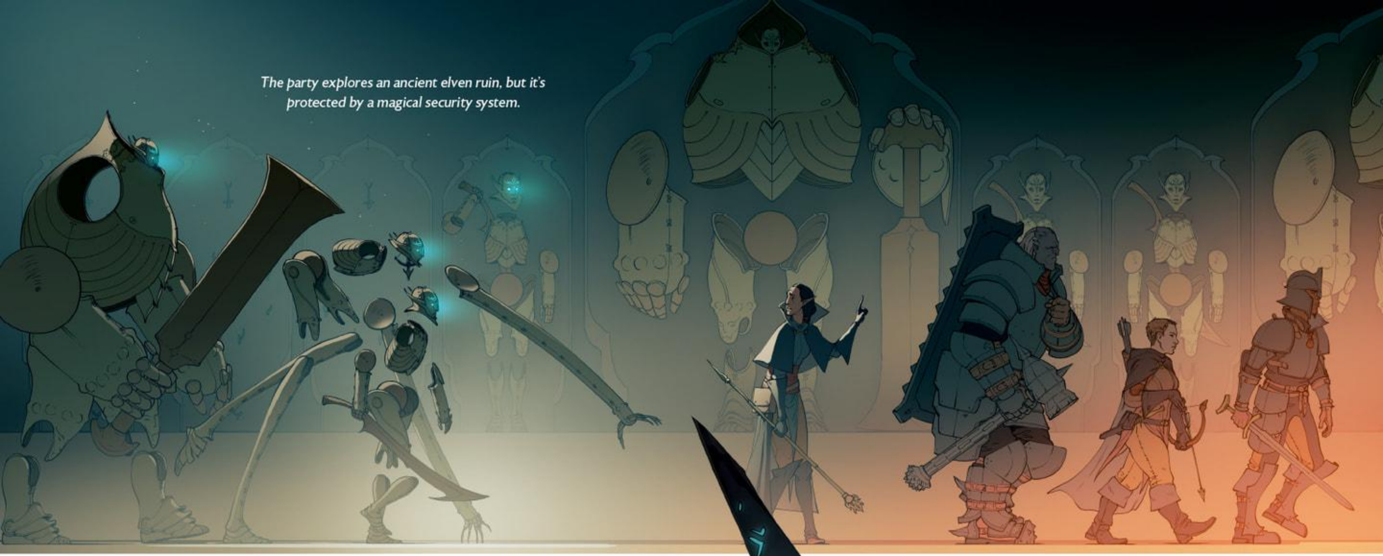
We tried taking the serpent motif to its logical conclusion. Oftentimes you don't know where the line is until you cross it.

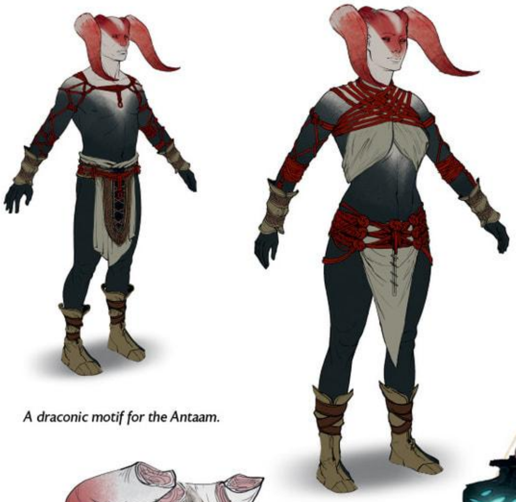


Academic robes for the mages' college.

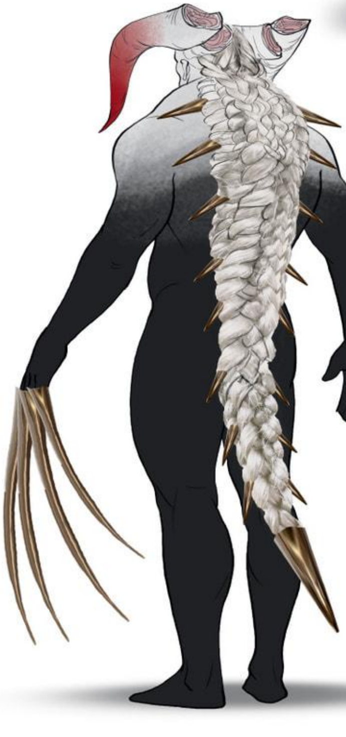
Exploring the various categories of Tevinter slaves.

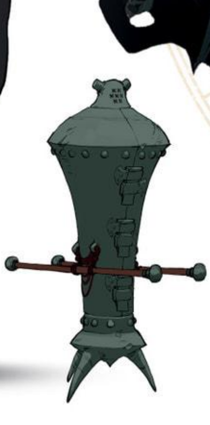
The party explores an ancient elven ruin, but it's protected by a magical security system.



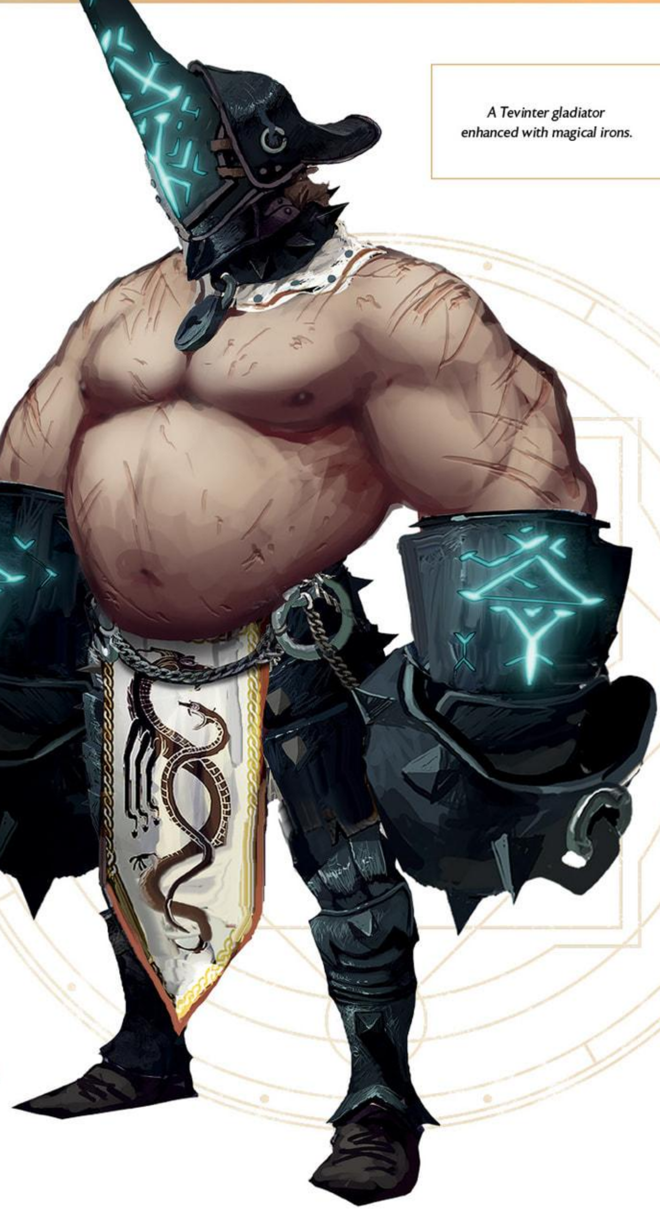


A draconic motif for the Antaam.



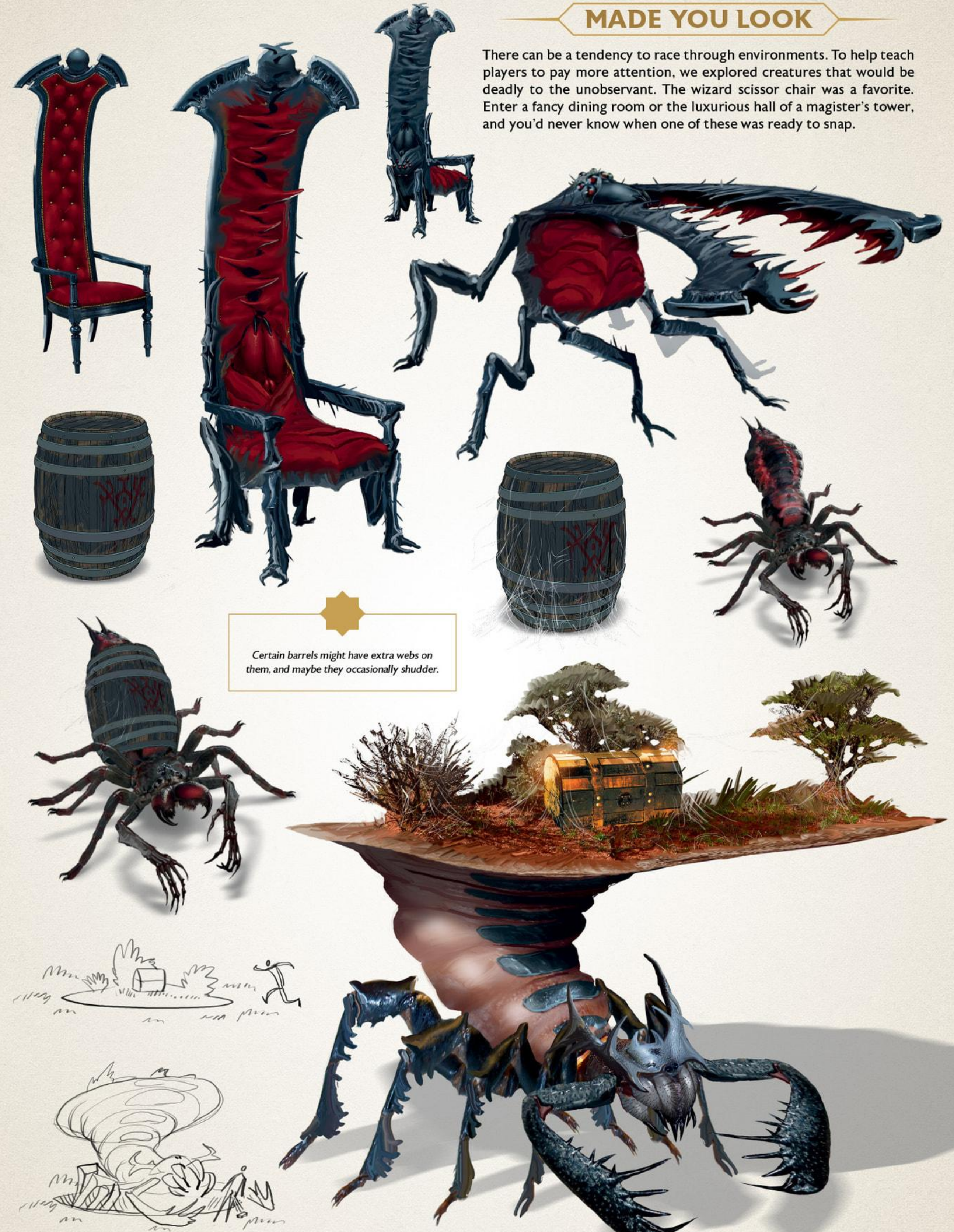


A Tevinter gladiator enhanced with magical irons.

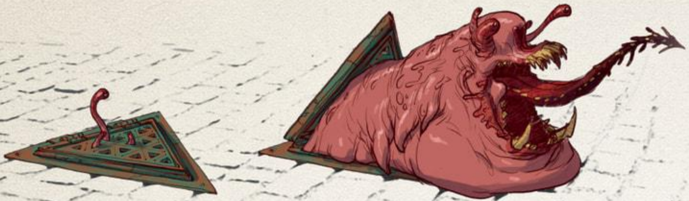


MADE YOU LOOK

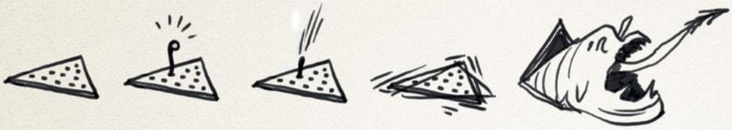
There can be a tendency to race through environments. To help teach players to pay more attention, we explored creatures that would be deadly to the unobservant. The wizard scissor chair was a favorite. Enter a fancy dining room or the luxurious hall of a magister's tower, and you'd never know when one of these was ready to snap.

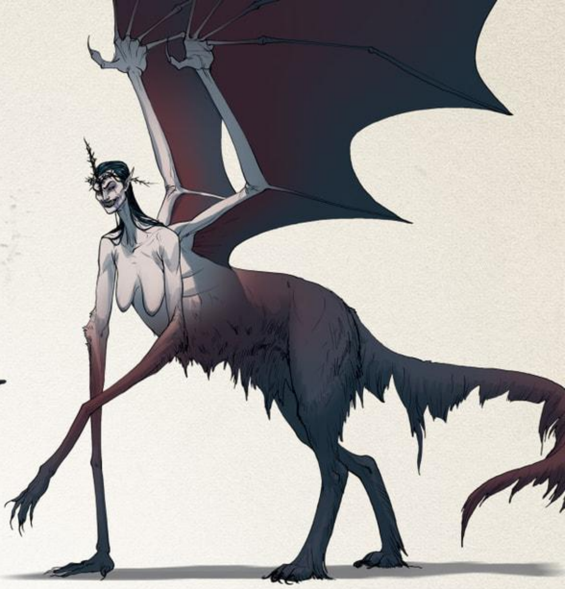


Certain barrels might have extra webs on them, and maybe they occasionally shudder.

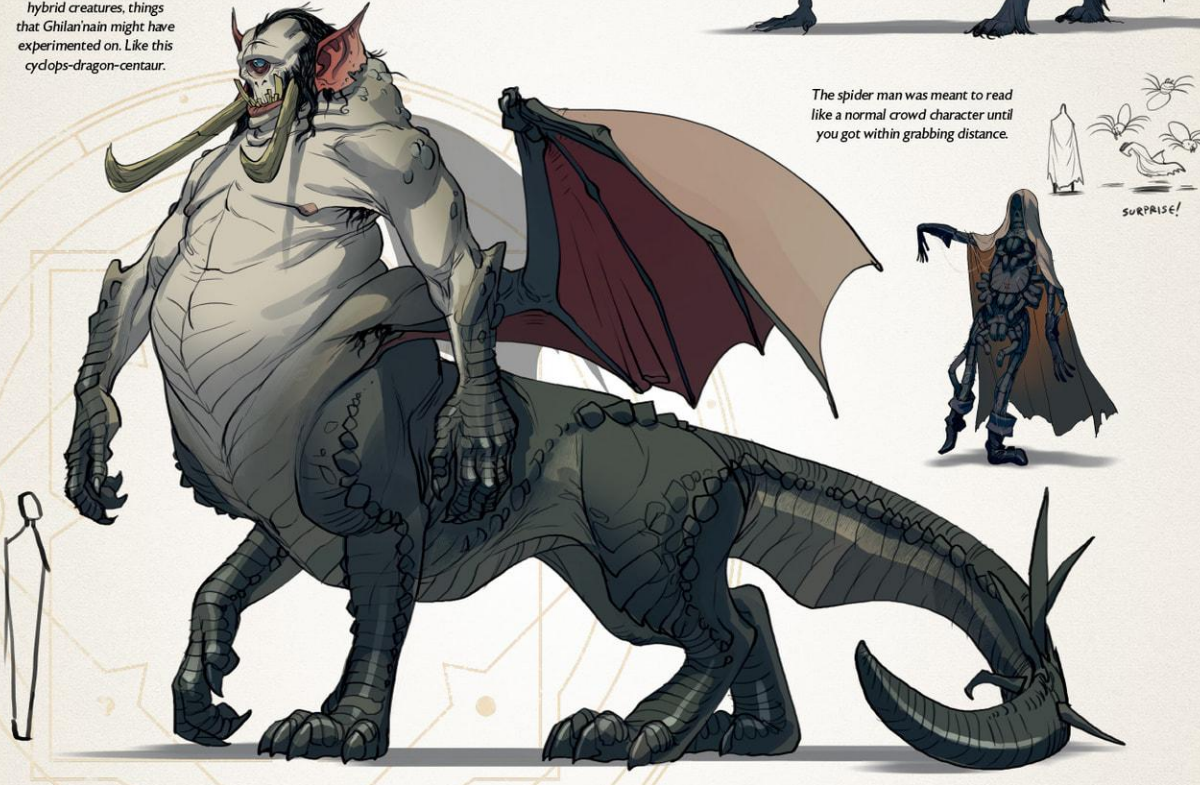


The sewer slug.



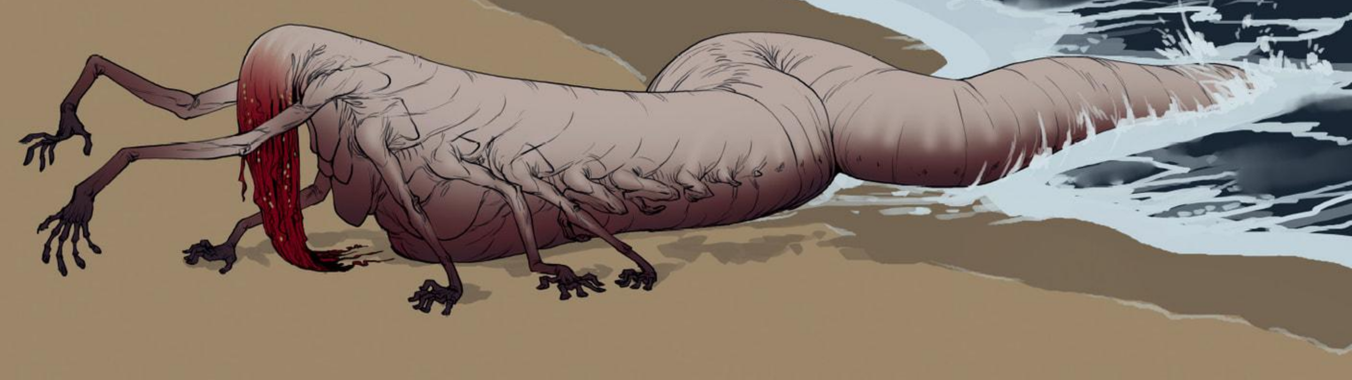


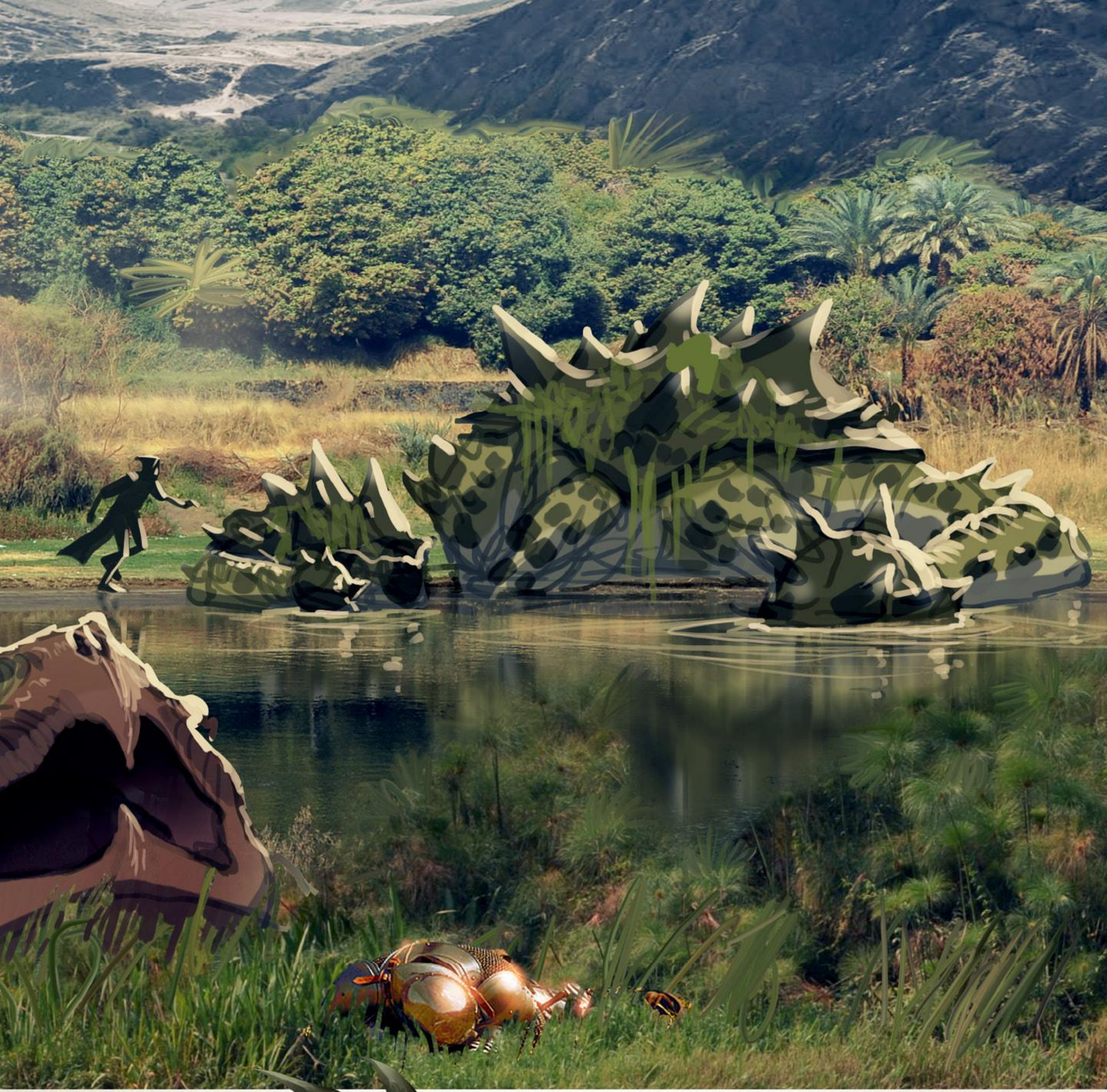
We tried to develop some hybrid creatures, things that Ghilan'nain might have experimented on. Like this cyclops-dragon-centaur.

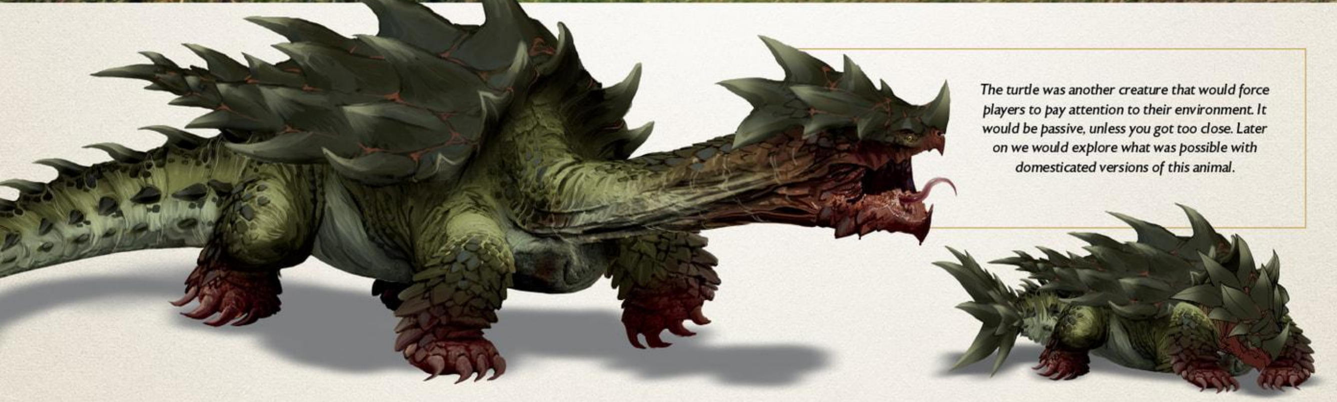


The spider man was meant to read like a normal crowd character until you got within grabbing distance.

Some creatures are designed to solve a problem. In this case, keeping players away from the ocean. This was meant to be Ghilan'nain's version of a mermaid.

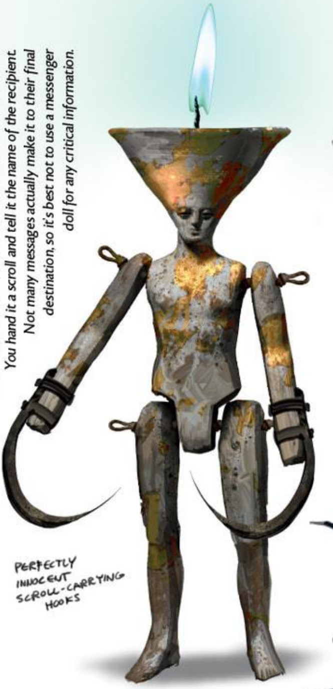


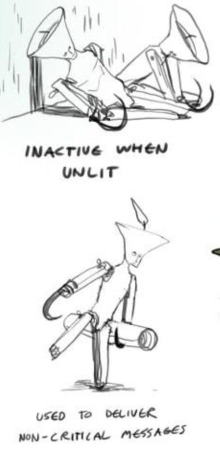




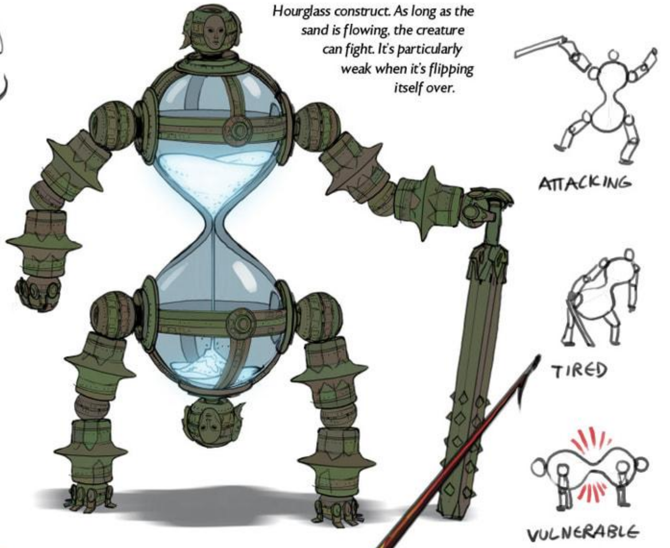
The turtle was another creature that would force players to pay attention to their environment. It would be passive, unless you got too close. Later on we would explore what was possible with domesticated versions of this animal.

Messenger dolls. When you light the candle, it comes to life. You hand it a scroll and tell it the name of the recipient. Not many messages actually make it to their final destination, so it's best not to use a messenger doll for any critical information.

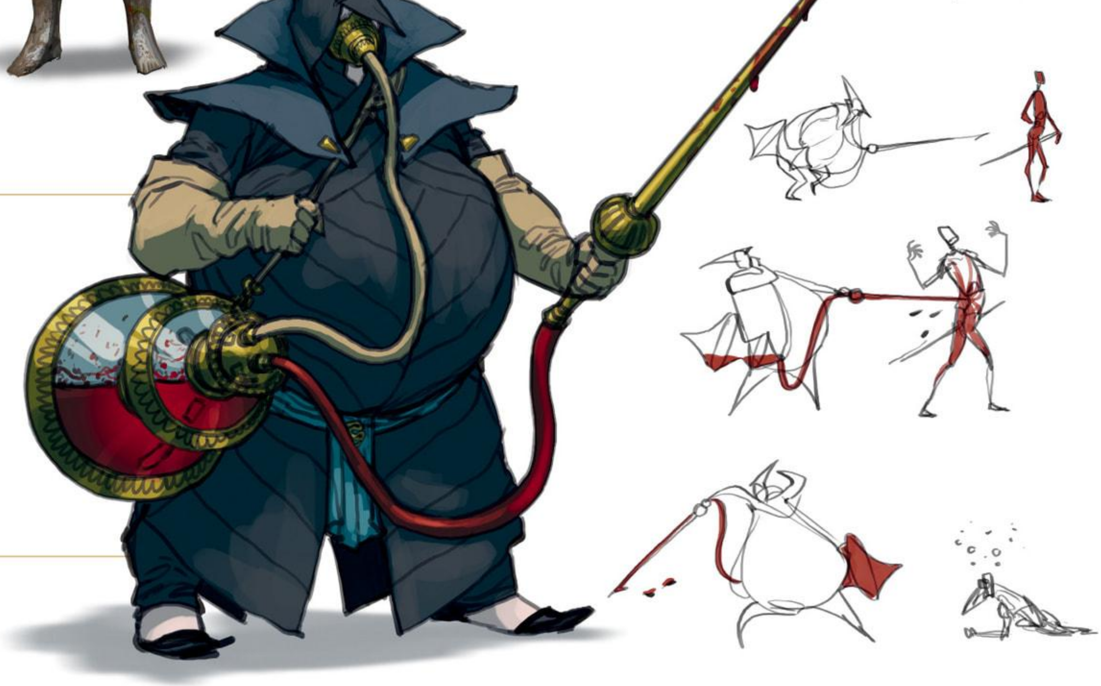

PERFECTLY INNOCENT SCROLL-CARRYING HOOKS

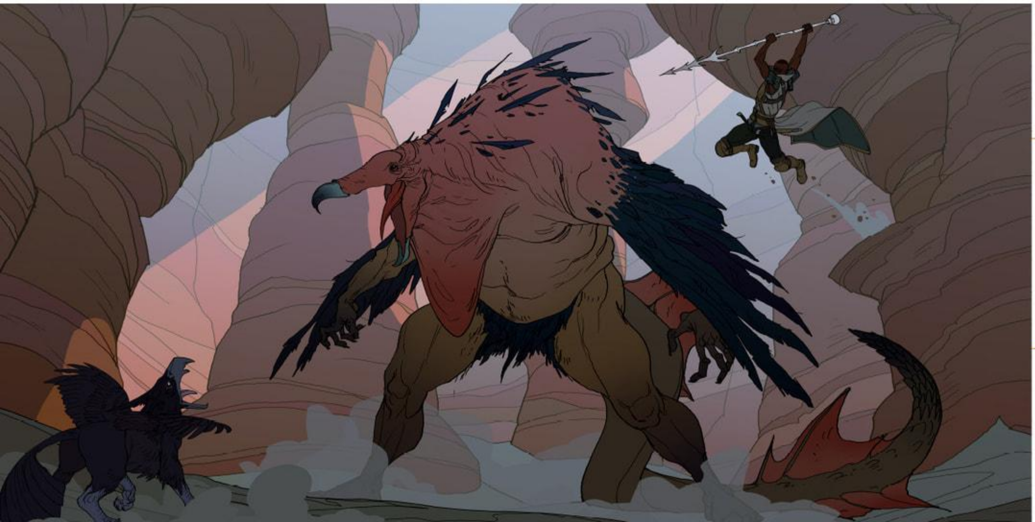

INACTIVE WHEN UNLIT
USED TO DELIVER NON-CRITICAL MESSAGES

Hourglass construct. As long as the sand is flowing, the creature can fight. It's particularly weak when it's flipping itself over.

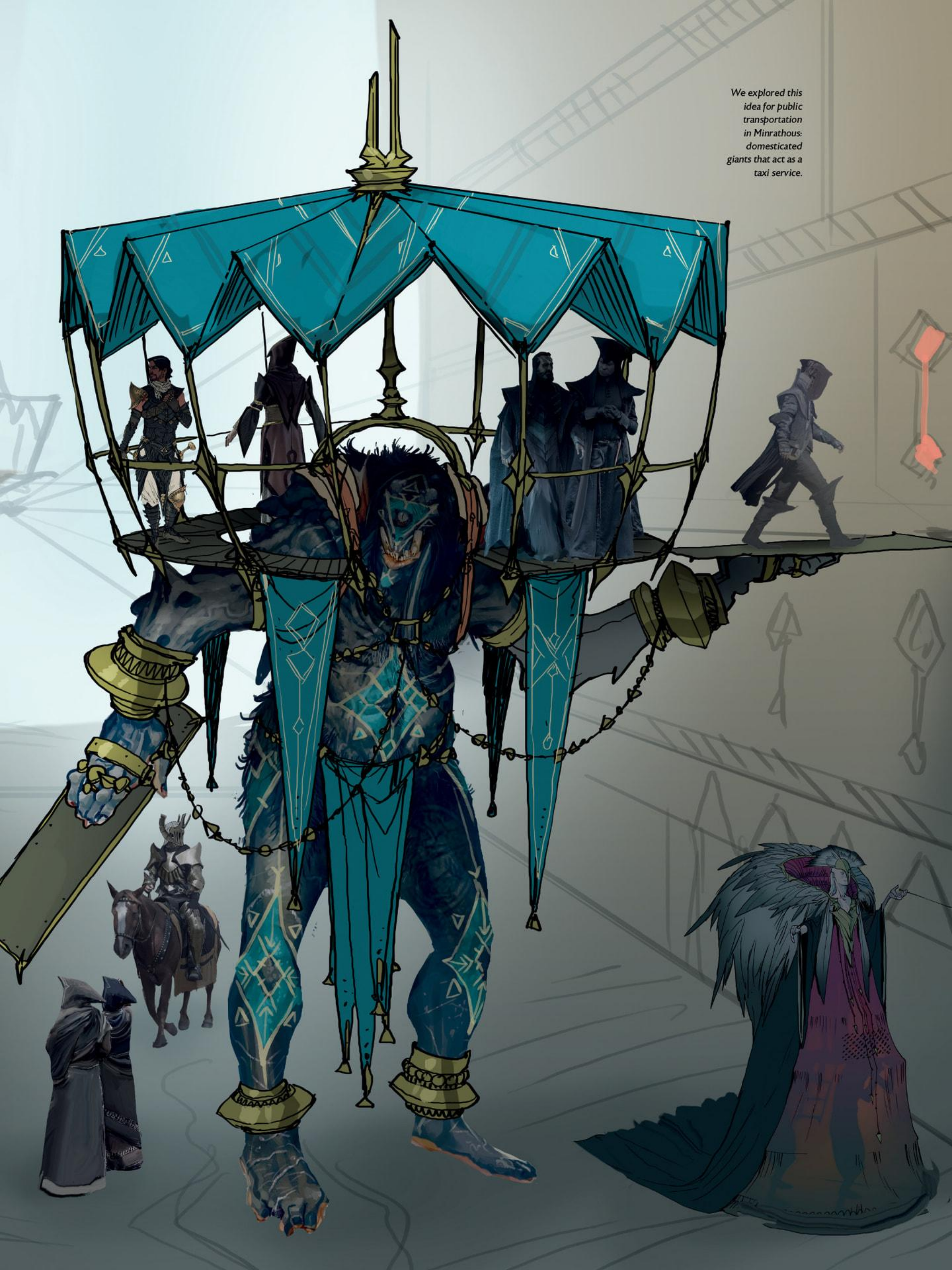

ATTACKING
TIRED
VULNERABLE

The practice of blood magic in Tevinter has created a black market for blood. Sometimes there simply aren't enough volunteers.

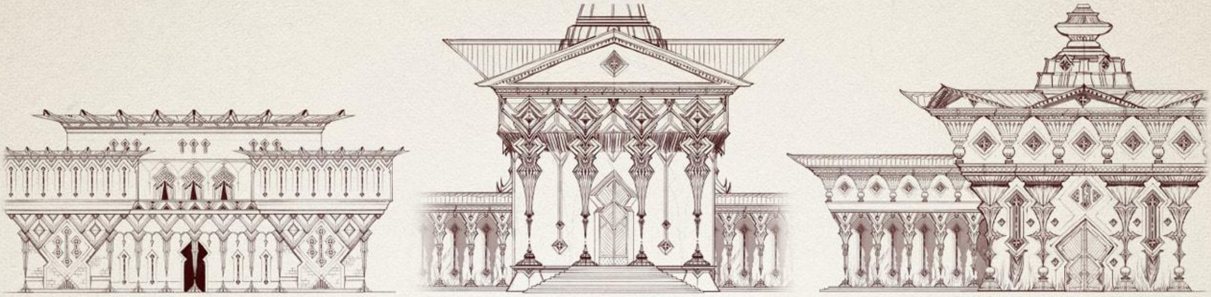




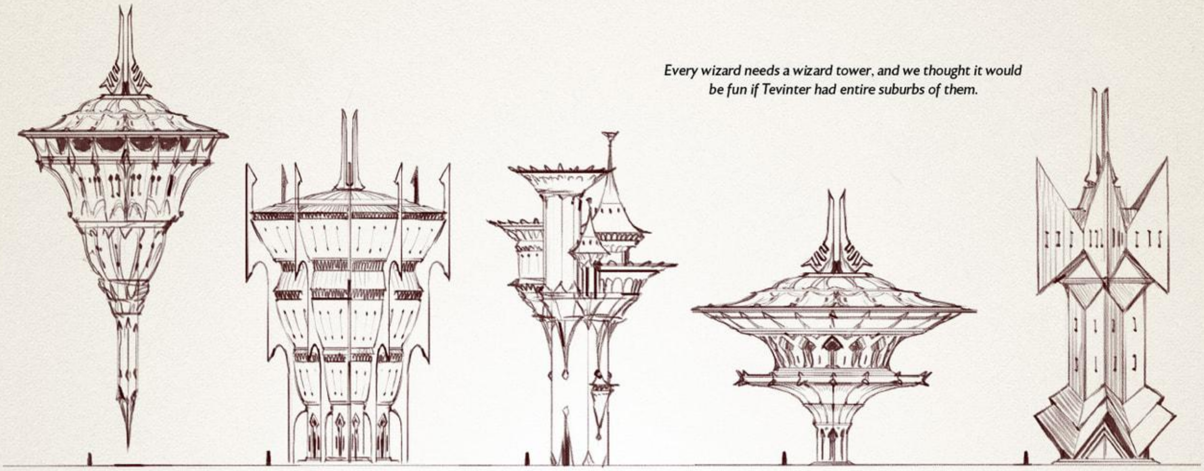
More of Ghilan'nain's hybrid creatures, this time a vulture-bear and a giant.



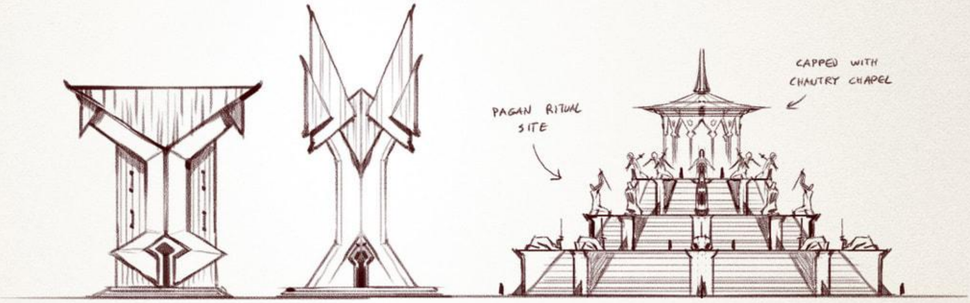
We explored this idea for public transportation in Minrathous: domesticated giants that act as a taxi service.

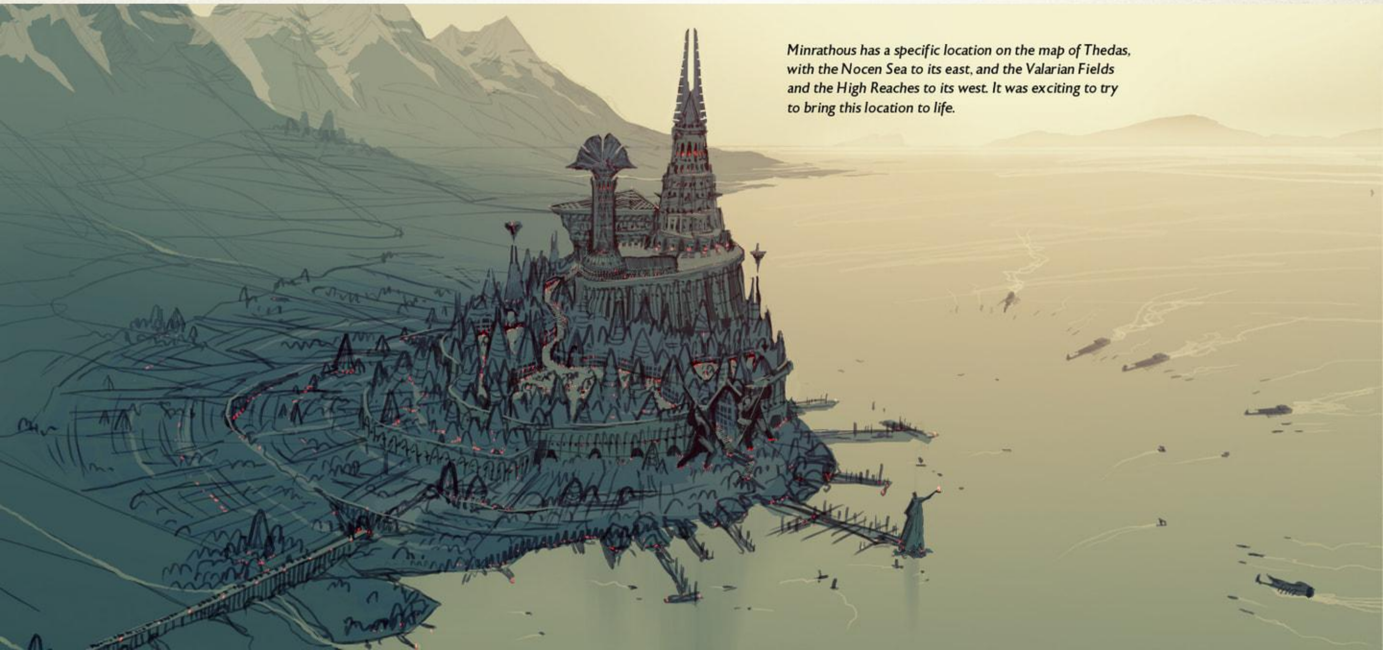


Every wizard needs a wizard tower, and we thought it would be fun if Tevinter had entire suburbs of them.

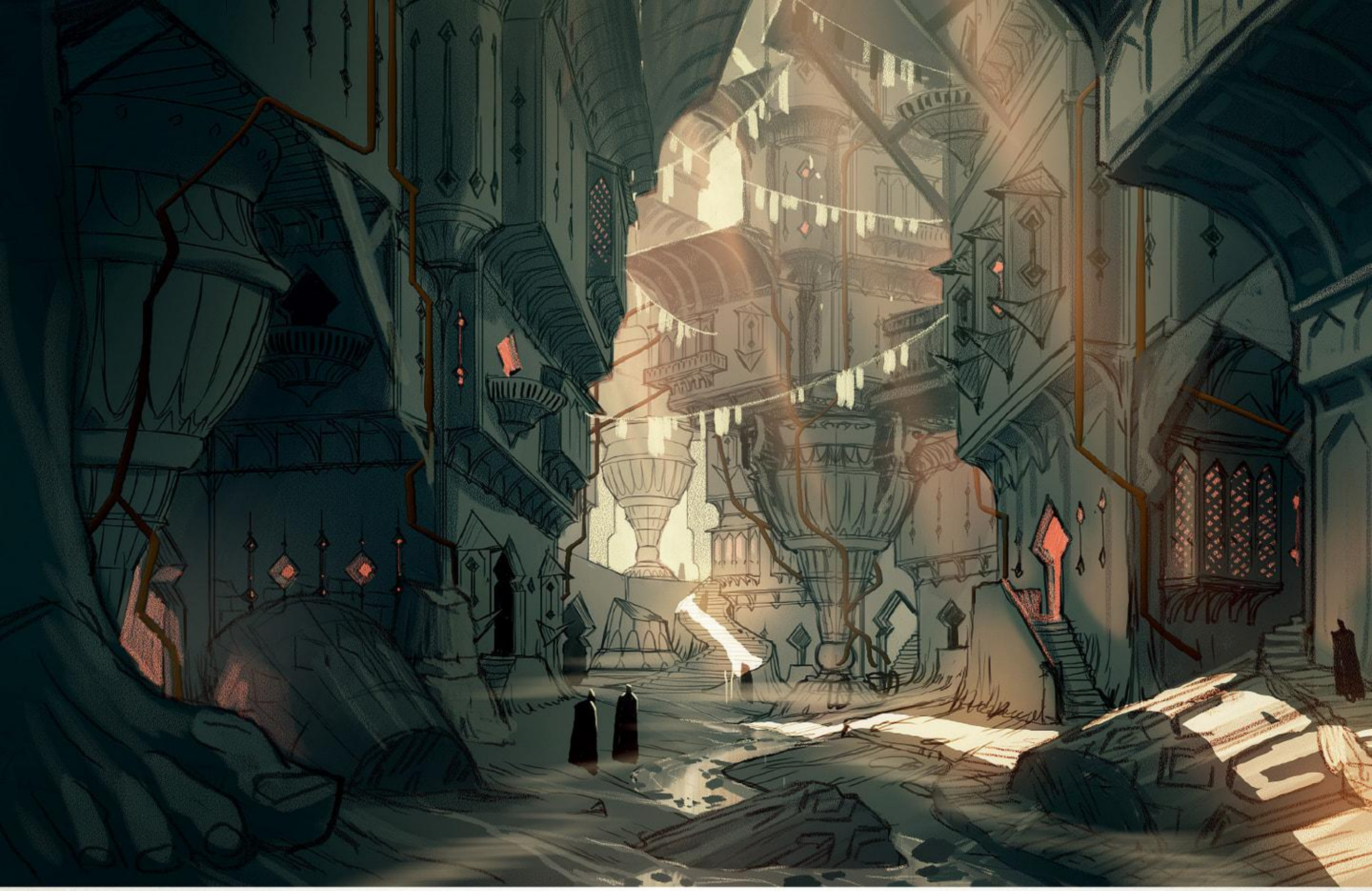


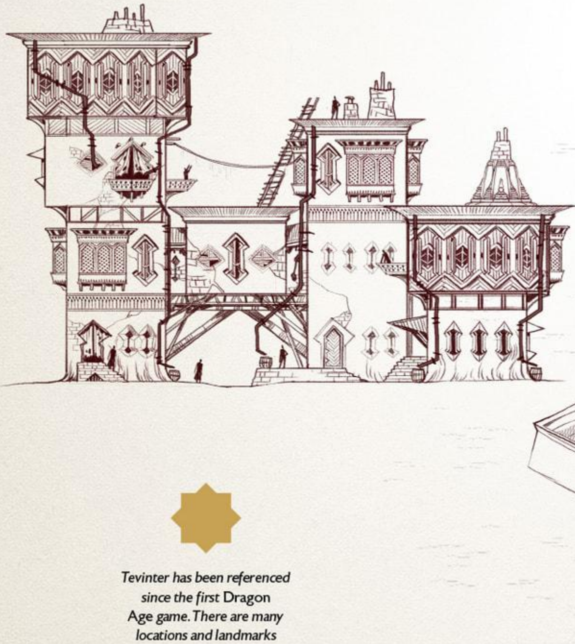
Early diagrams like this help to flesh out the visual language of a location. Starting with the Tevinter tile sets and props we made in Inquisition, we expanded on the sharp, angled, proud shape language.



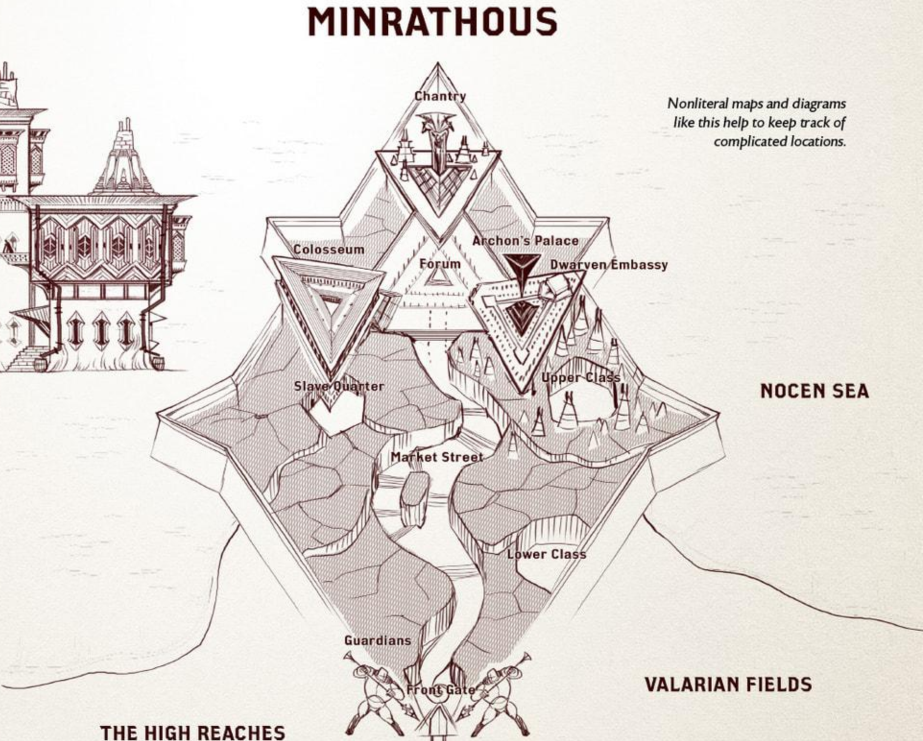


Minrathous has a specific location on the map of Thedas, with the Nocen Sea to its east, and the Valarian Fields and the High Reaches to its west. It was exciting to try to bring this location to life.





Tevinter has been referenced since the first *Dragon Age* game. There are many locations and landmarks that have been mentioned in dialogue and journal entries. As we began to build Tevinter for real, we tried to organize these elements into a cohesive whole.


MINRATHOUS
Chantry
Archon's Palace
Colosseum
Forum
Dwarven Embassy
Slave Quarter
Upper Class
NOCEN SEA
Market Street
Lower Class
Guardians
Front Gate
VALARIAN FIELDS
THE HIGH REACHES
↓
Imperial Highway

Nonliteral maps and diagrams like this help to keep track of complicated locations.

PART THREE

THE VEILGUARD

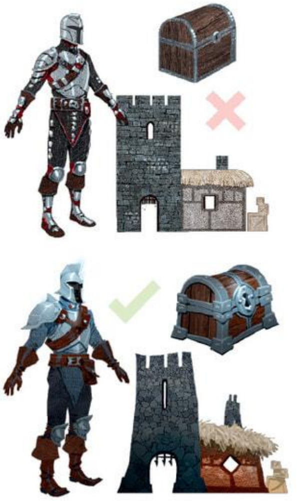
COLEAN SEA
NOCEAN SEA

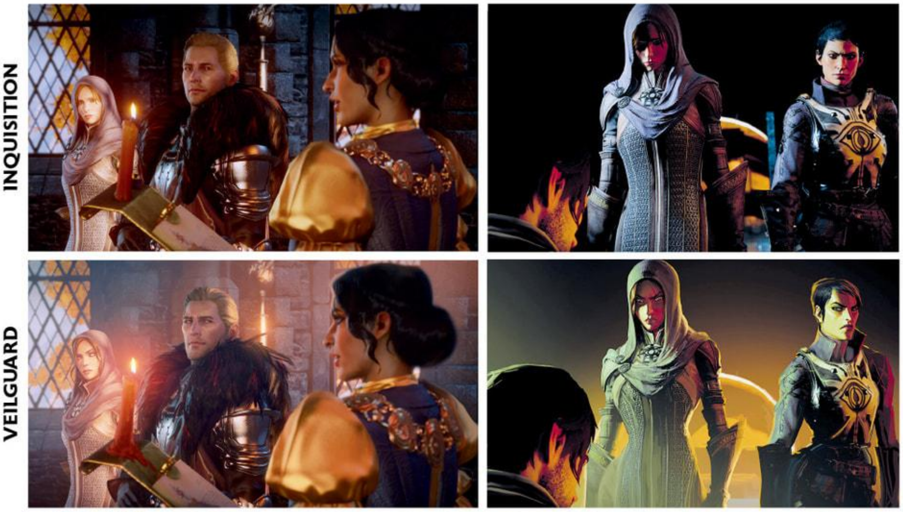
BOERIC OCEAN
VENEFICATION SEA
RIALTO BAY

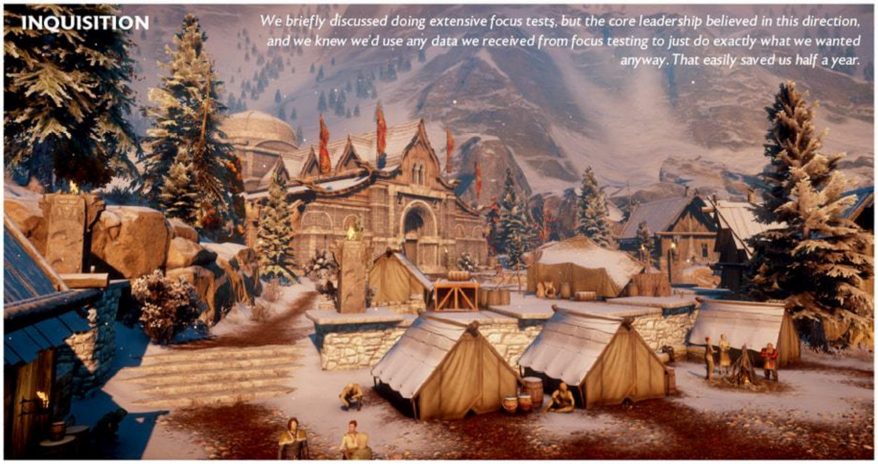
A symbolic map of Thedas. Rather than providing specific cartographical information, it expresses the character of each region.

ART STYLE

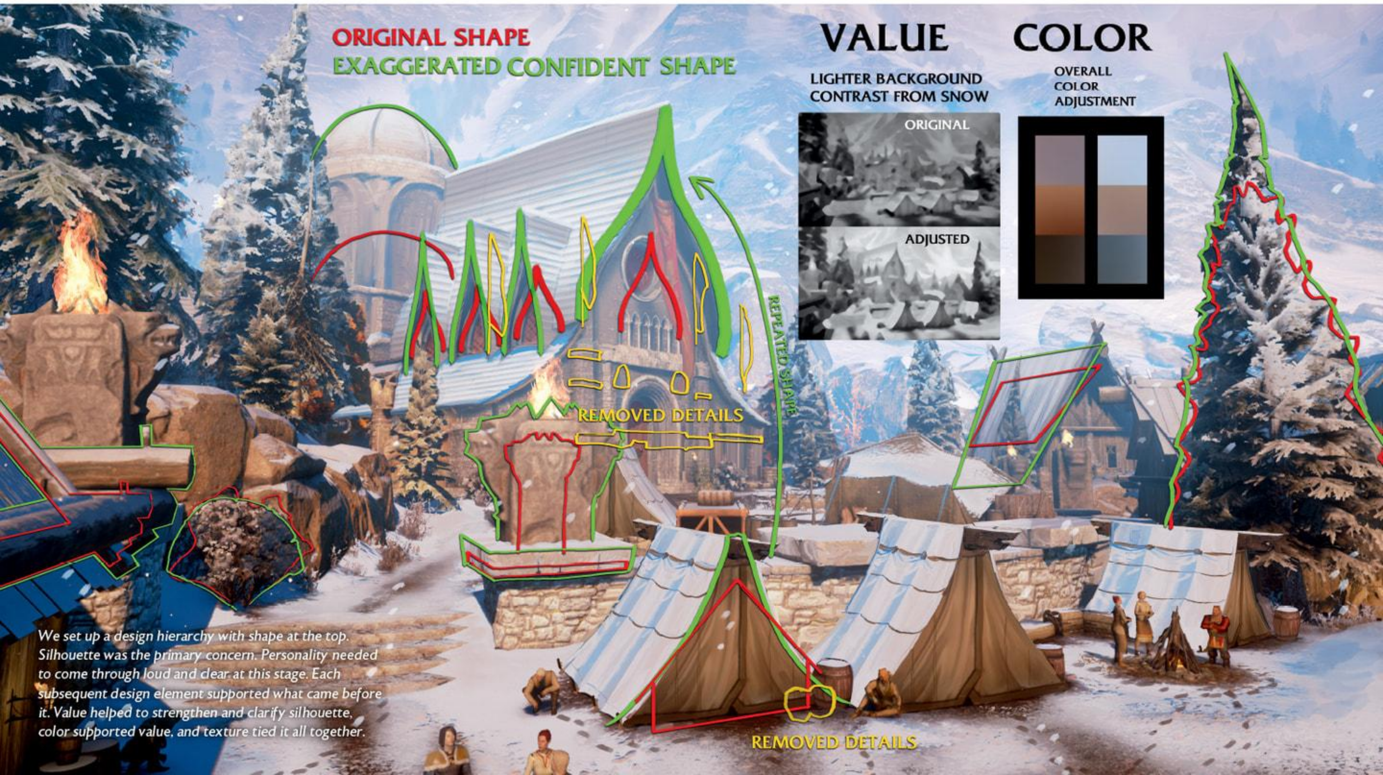
Dragon Age has never exactly been photorealistic. *Dragon Age: Origins* was loosely based on fantasy paintings, filtered through the limitations of the technology of the time. In *Dragon Age II* and continuing in *Inquisition*, we wanted to push our characters' designs to support their strong personalities. For *Veilguard*, we wanted to take a confident step away from the uncanny valley and toward even stronger characterization. The goal was to make personality and emotion read more clearly, in the same way theatrical makeup exaggerates an actor's features.



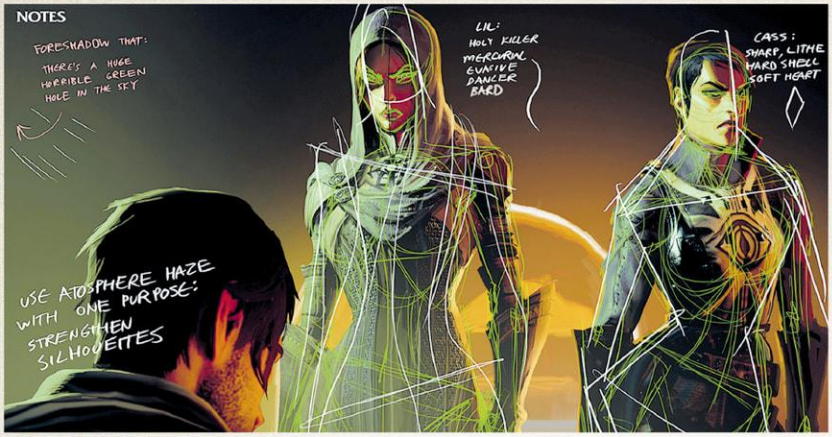

INQUISITION
VEILGUARD


INQUISITION

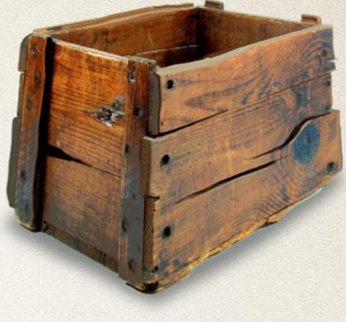
We briefly discussed doing extensive focus tests, but the core leadership believed in this direction, and we knew we'd use any data we received from focus testing to just do exactly what we wanted anyway. That easily saved us half a year.


ORIGINAL SHAPE
EXAGGERATED CONFIDENT SHAPE
VALUE
LIGHTER BACKGROUND CONTRAST FROM SNOW
ORIGINAL
ADJUSTED
COLOR
OVERALL COLOR ADJUSTMENT
REPEATED SHAPES
REMOVED DETAILS
REMOVED DETAILS

We set up a design hierarchy with shape at the top. Silhouette was the primary concern. Personality needed to come through loud and clear at this stage. Each subsequent design element supported what came before it. Value helped to strengthen and clarify silhouette, color supported value, and texture tied it all together.

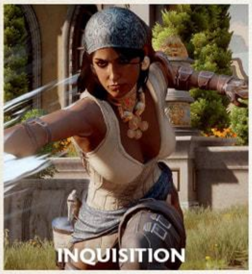

NOTES
FORESHADOW THAT:
THERE'S A HUGE HORRIBLE GREEN HOLE IN THE SKY
LIL:
HOLY KILLER
MERCURIAL
EVASIVE
DANCER
BARD
CASS:
SHARP, LITHE
HARD SHELL
SOFT HEART
USE ATOSPHERE HAZE WITH ONE PURPOSE:
STRENGTHEN SILHOUETTES

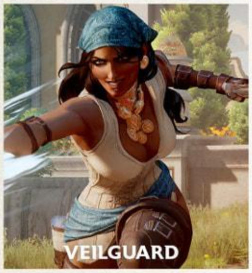
VEILGUARD



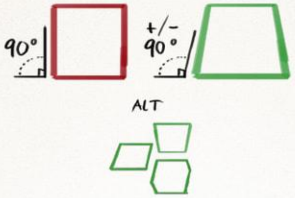
EXAGGERATED:
-SHAPE
-COLOR

REALISTIC:
-SURFACE
RESPONSE

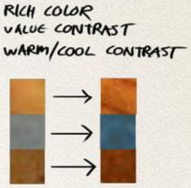

INQUISITION

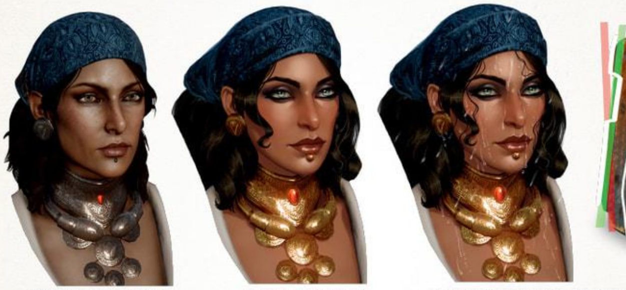


The box: We were pushing personality in characters and environments, but the real test of our principles was this box.

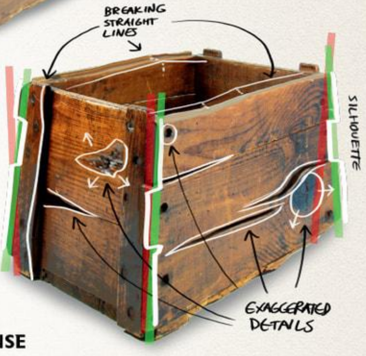


PHOTO


RICH COLOR
VALUE CONTRAST
WARM/COOL CONTRAST

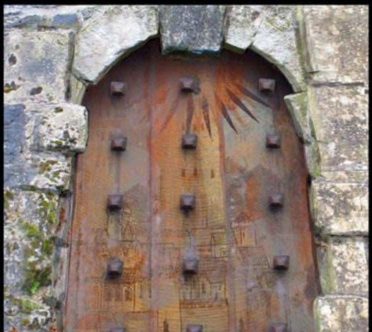


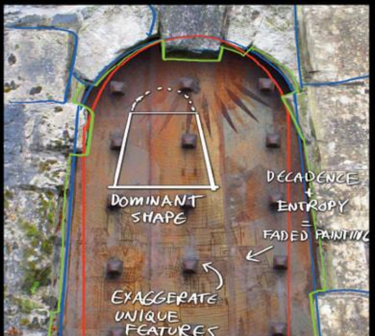
INQUISITION **VEILGUARD** **SURFACE RESPONSE**


BREAKING STRAIGHT LINES
SILHOUETTE
EXAGGERATED DETAILS

REFERENCE

VEILGUARD




DOMINANT SHAPE
DECADENCE + ENTROPY = FADED PAINTING
EXAGGERATE UNIQUE FEATURES
MORE VARIETY IN STONE SIZES

BELIEVABLE PERSONALITY
-PUSH THE SHAPES TO TELL THE STORY
-VALUE, COLOR, TEXTURE SUPPORT SHAPES

EXAMPLE:

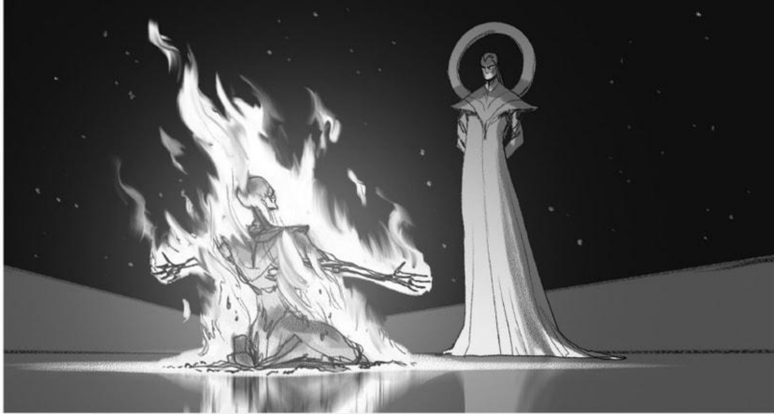
TEVINTER DESCRIPTION

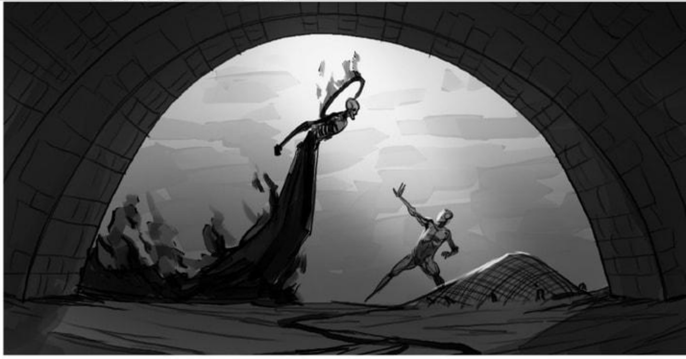
1. DOMINANCE
ICONOGRAPHY, AGGRESSIVE, PRIDE, SURVEILLANCE
2. ENTROPY
DECAY, NEGLECT, DUST, FORGOTTEN
3. DECADENCE
SEDUCTIVE, INDULGENT, LUXURIOUS

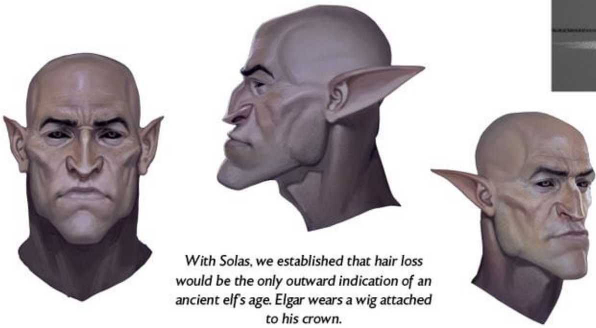
ELGAR'NAN

The elven god of tyranny, vengeance, fatherhood, and the sun. All-Father of the elven pantheon.

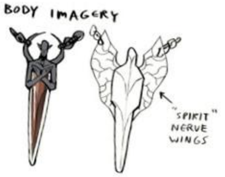
In previous games, we've seen powerful human mages that obeyed evil gods, broke into the Black City, and were corrupted. This time we were going to see the evil gods themselves. We wanted to make previous characters like Corypheus and the Architect look like crude copies next to Elgar's controlled visage.



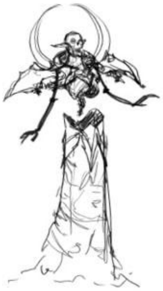


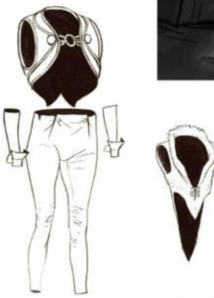


With Solas, we established that hair loss would be the only outward indication of an ancient elf's age. Elgar wears a wig attached to his crown.

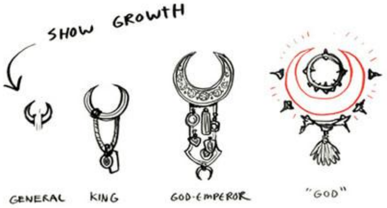


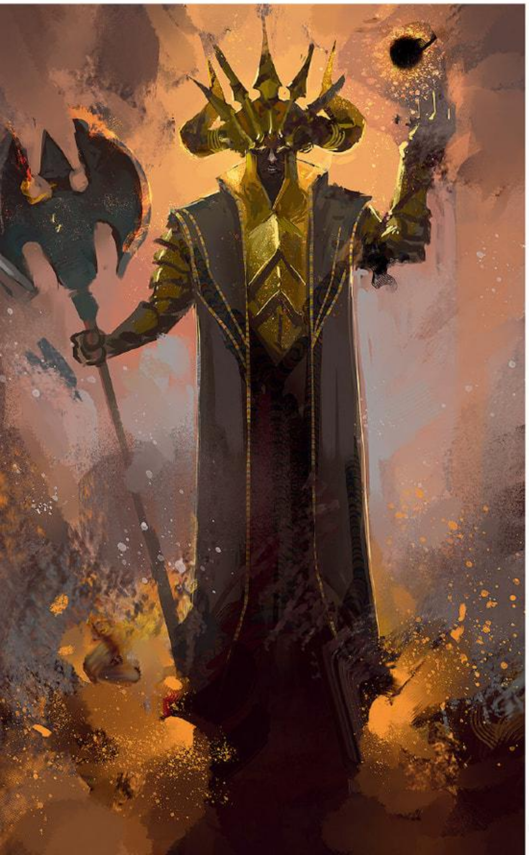
The shards of lyrium around his collar were each taken from a slain Titan during the war between the first elves and the Titans. They have become corrupted by their time in the Black City.

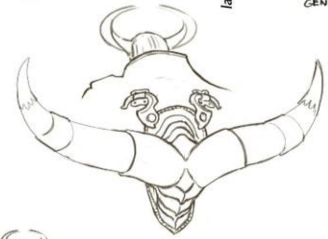


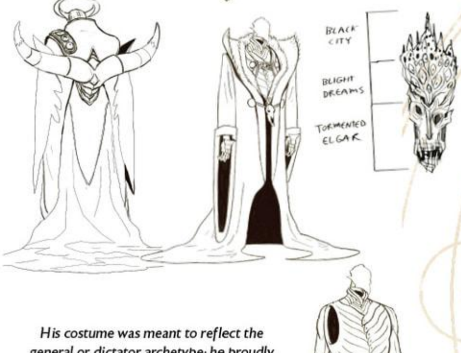


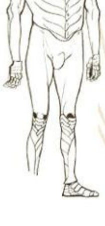
Elgar uses an eclipse shape language, a reference to being the god of fire and shadow.



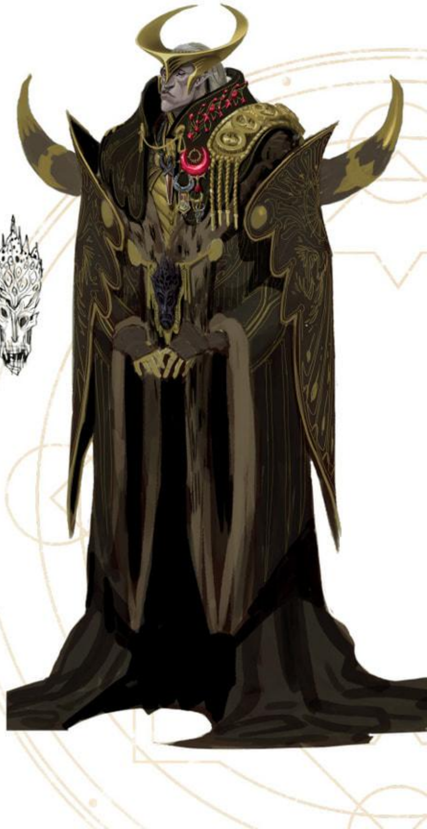


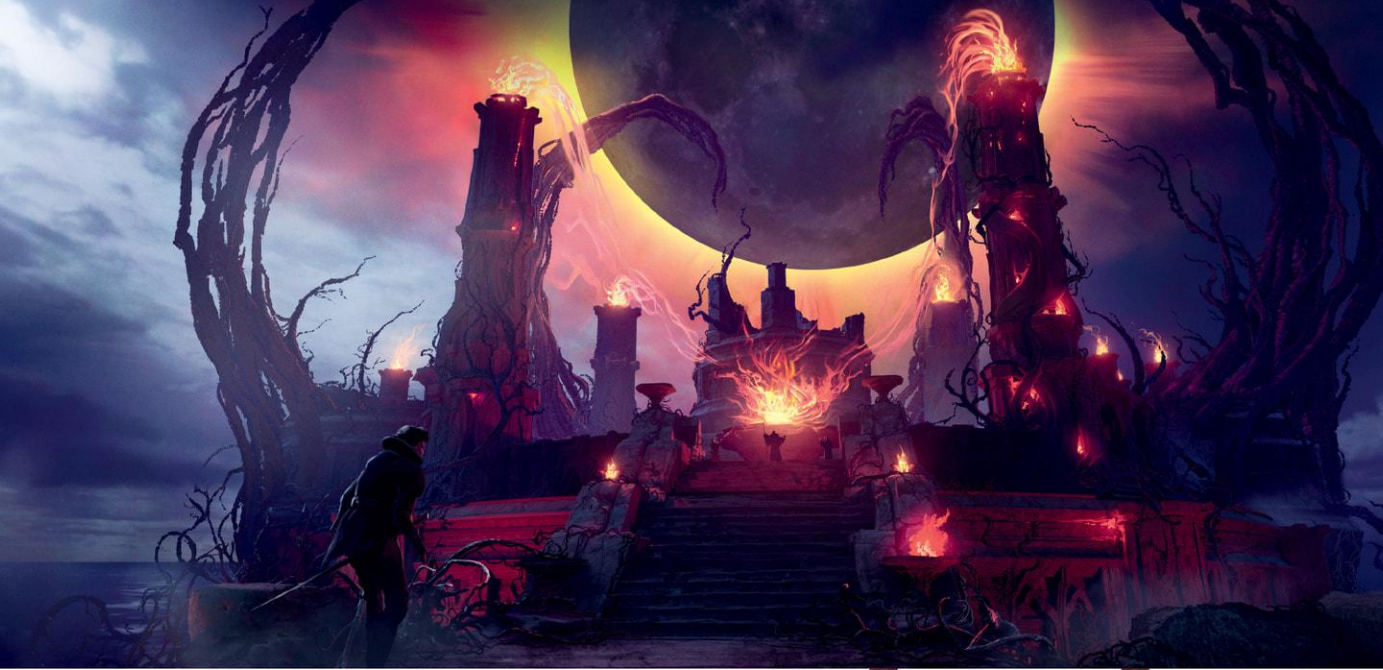


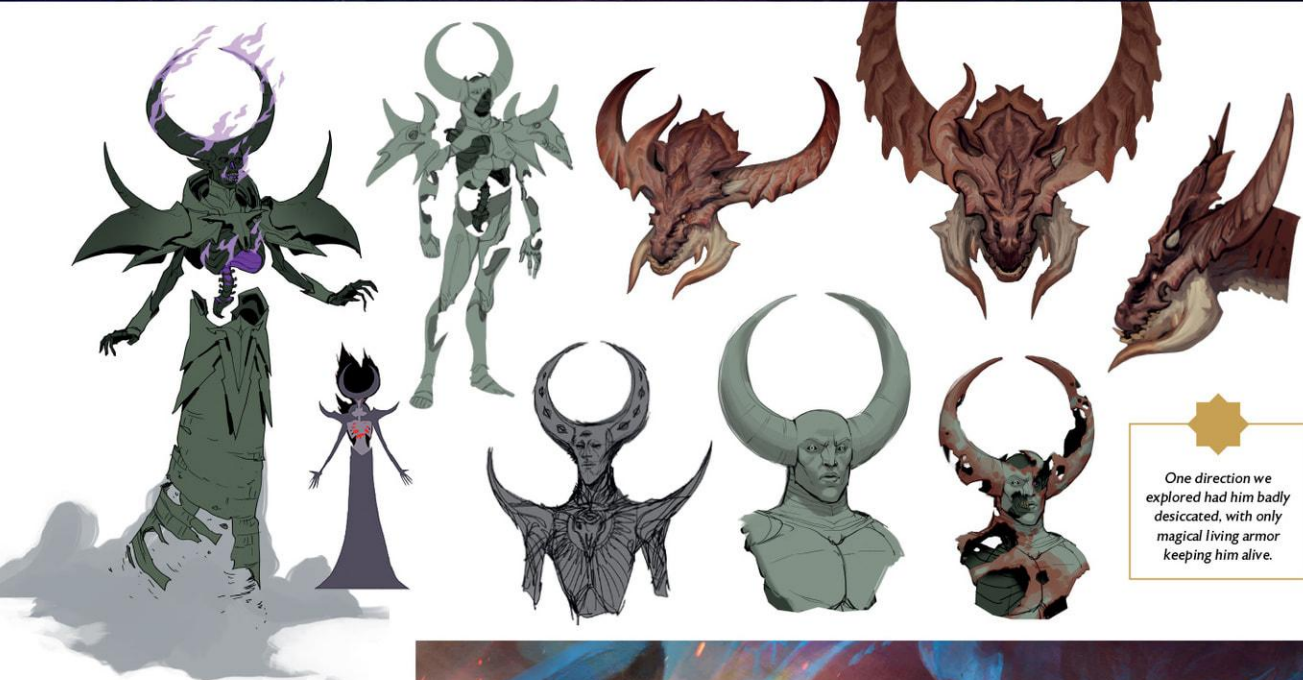




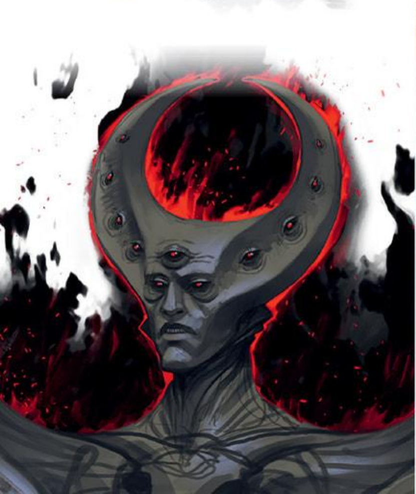
His costume was meant to reflect the general or dictator archetype; he proudly brandishes the medals of his previous conquests as a symbol of authority. The badges on his coat are more modest at the bottom but become more and more ostentatious as his victories (and his pride) increase. He also wears around his neck a vial of dust, taken from the same spot where his spirit self-formed his body from the dust.

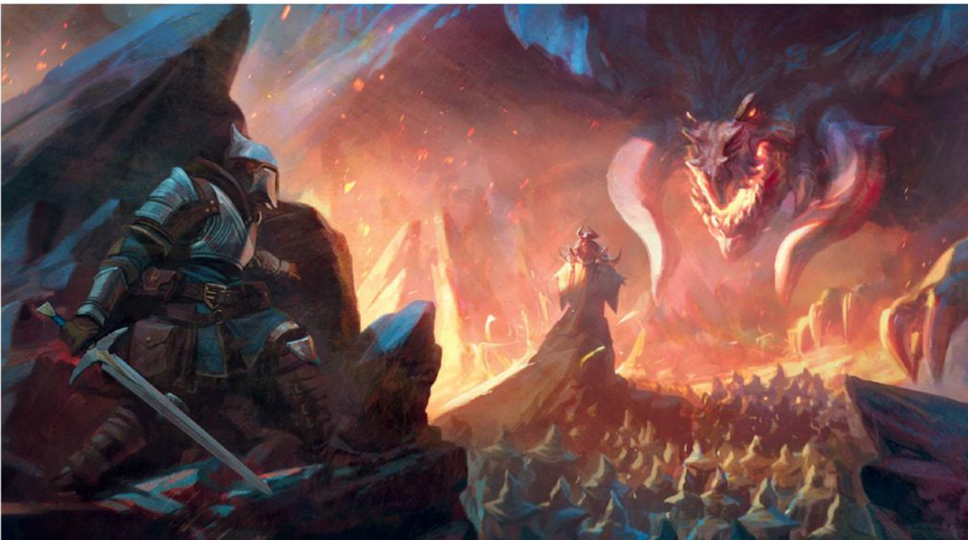


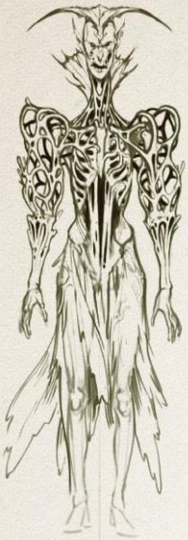


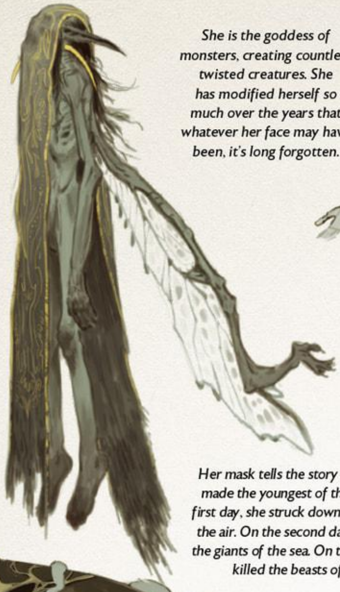


One direction we explored had him badly desiccated, with only magical living armor keeping him alive.

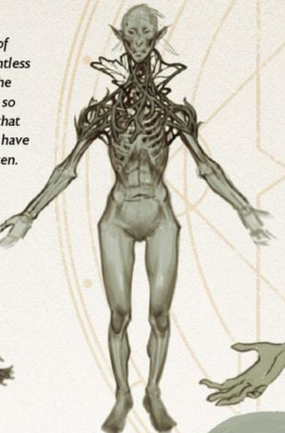




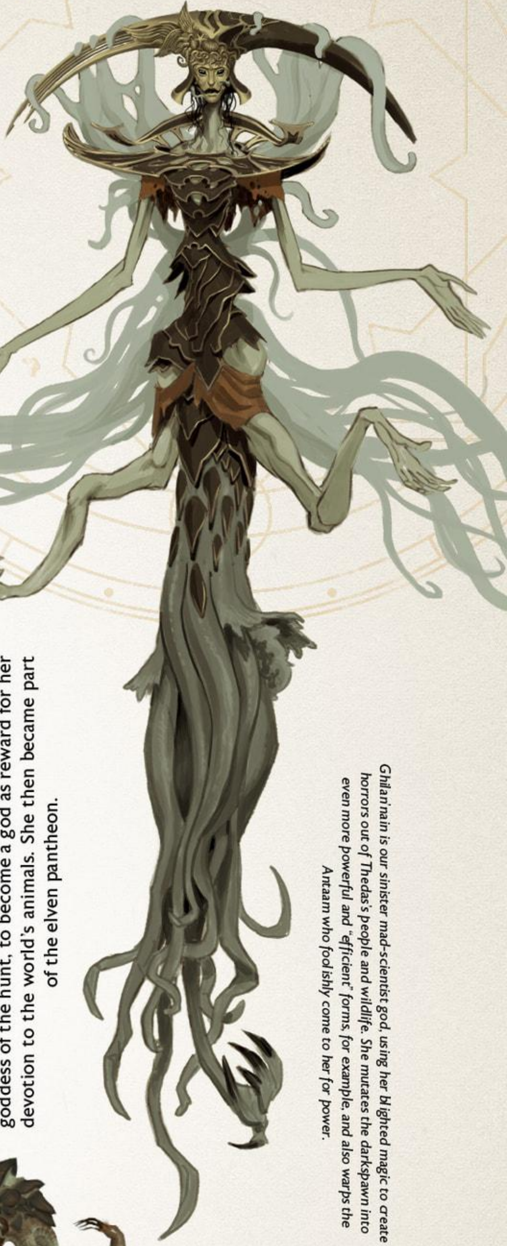




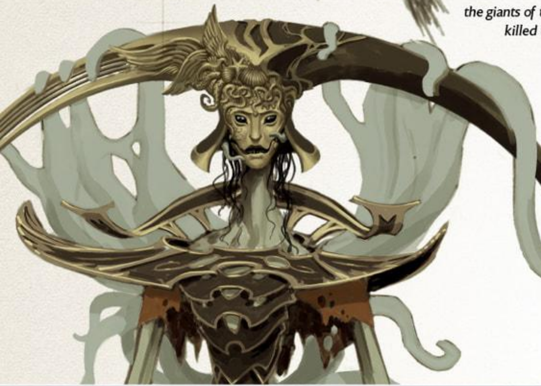
She is the goddess of monsters, creating countless twisted creatures. She has modified herself so much over the years that whatever her face may have been, it's long forgotten.

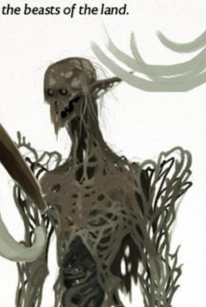


Her mask tells the story of how she was made the youngest of the gods. On the first day, she struck down the monsters of the air. On the second day, she drowned the giants of the sea. On the third day, she killed the beasts of the land.



Ghilan'nain is our sinister mad-scientist god, using her blighted magic to create horrors out of Thedas's people and wildlife. She mutates the darkspawn into even more powerful and "efficient" forms, for example, and also warps the Antaam who foolishly come to her for power.

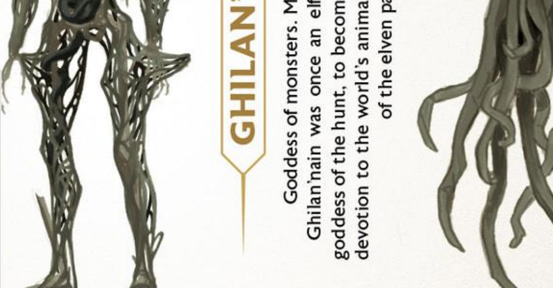


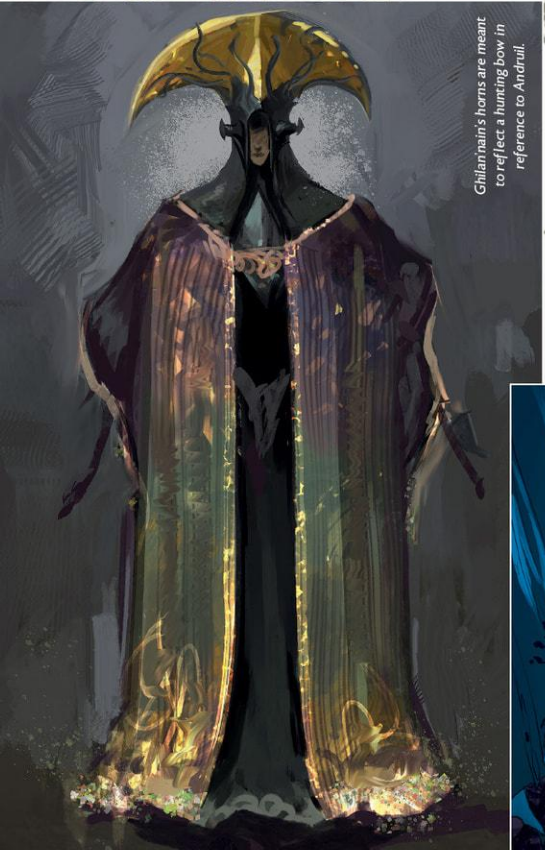


GHILAN'NAIN

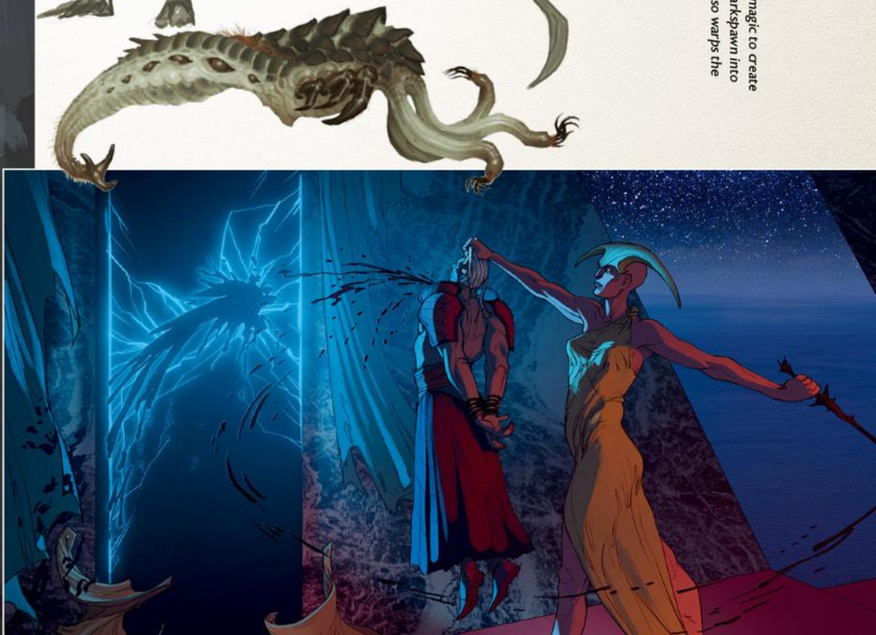
Goddess of monsters. Mother of the Halla.

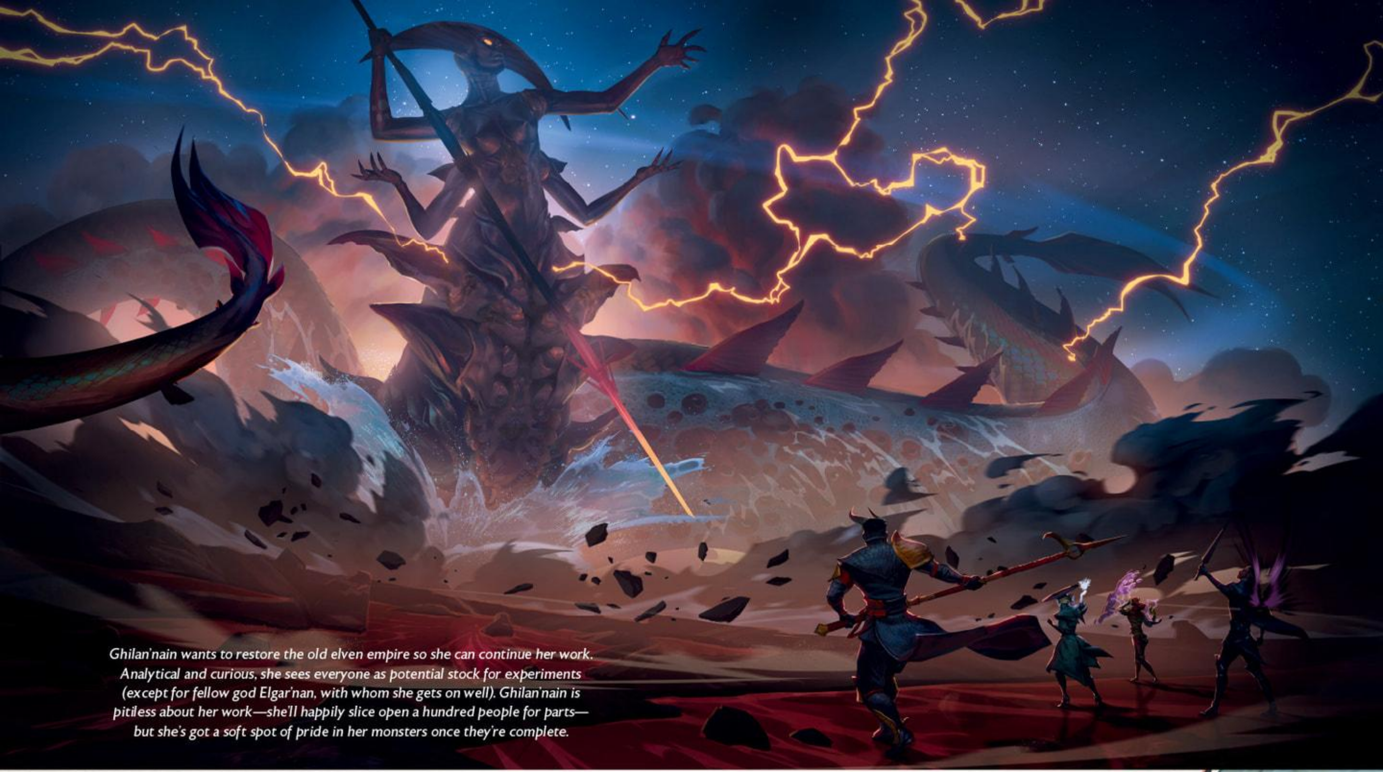
Ghilan'nain was once an elf chosen by Andruil, the goddess of the hunt, to become a god as reward for her devotion to the world's animals. She then became part of the elven pantheon.



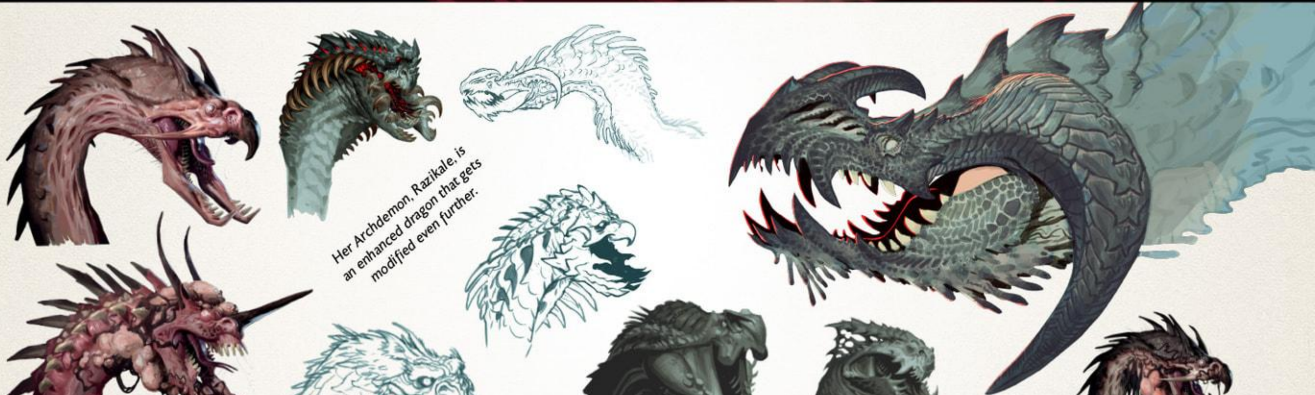


Ghilan'nain's horns are meant to reflect a hunting bow in reference to Andruil.

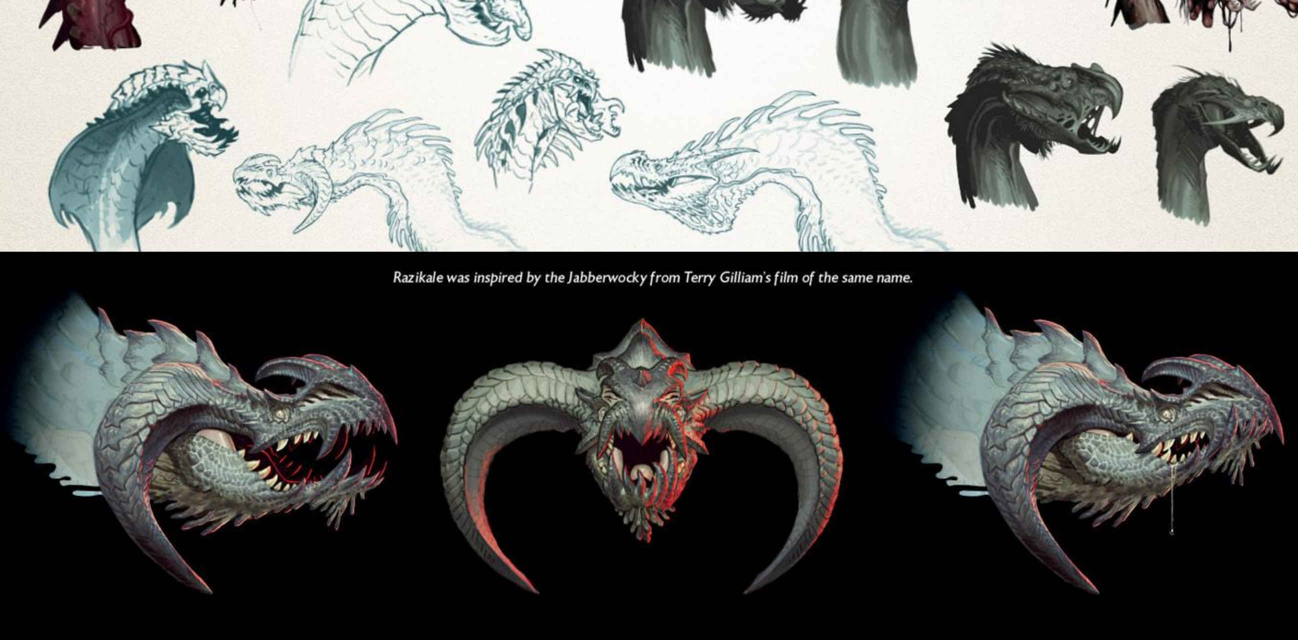




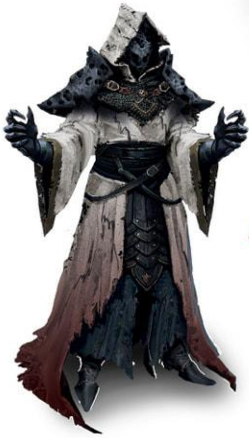
Ghilan'nain wants to restore the old elven empire so she can continue her work. Analytical and curious, she sees everyone as potential stock for experiments (except for fellow god Elgar'nan, with whom she gets on well). Ghilan'nain is pitiless about her work—she'll happily slice open a hundred people for parts—but she's got a soft spot of pride in her monsters once they're complete.

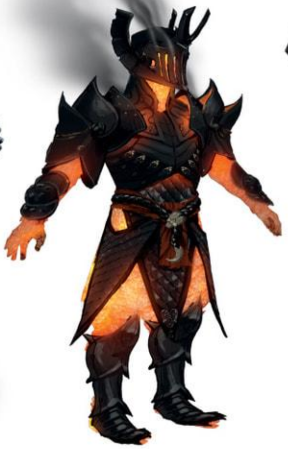


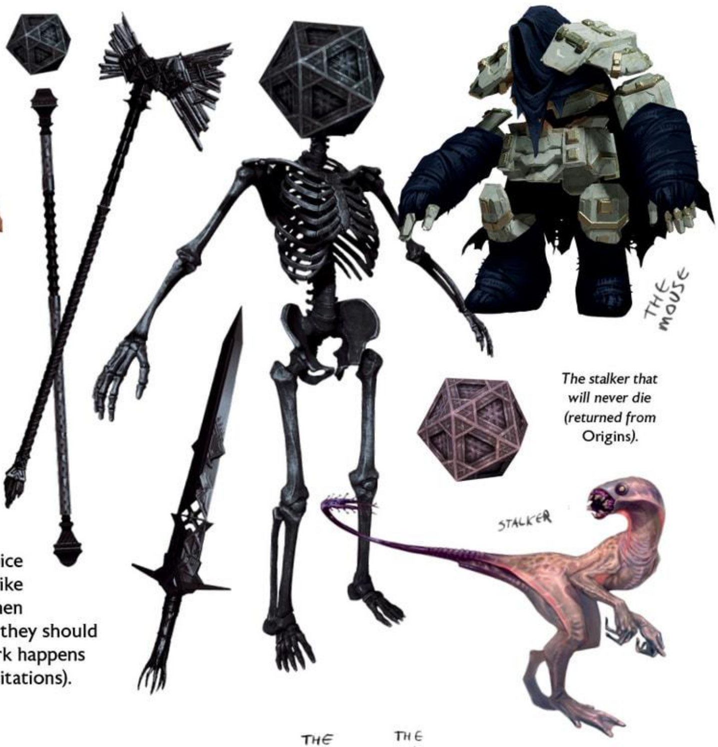
Her Archdemon, Razikale, is an enhanced dragon that gets modified even further.



Razikale was inspired by the Jabberwocky from Terry Gilliam's film of the same name.



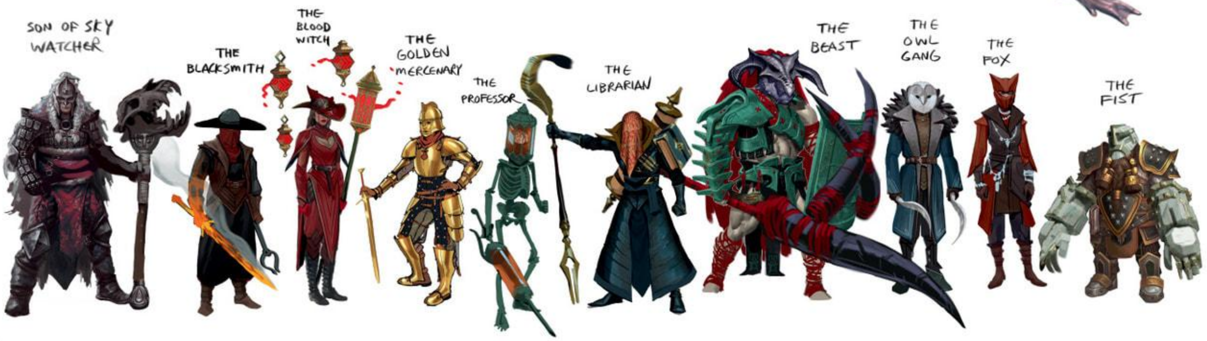


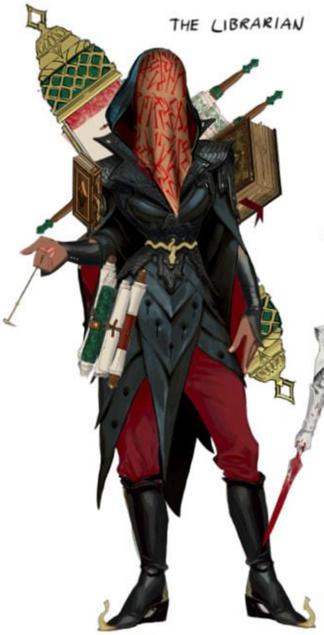

THE MOUSE
STALKER

The stalker that will never die (returned from Origins).

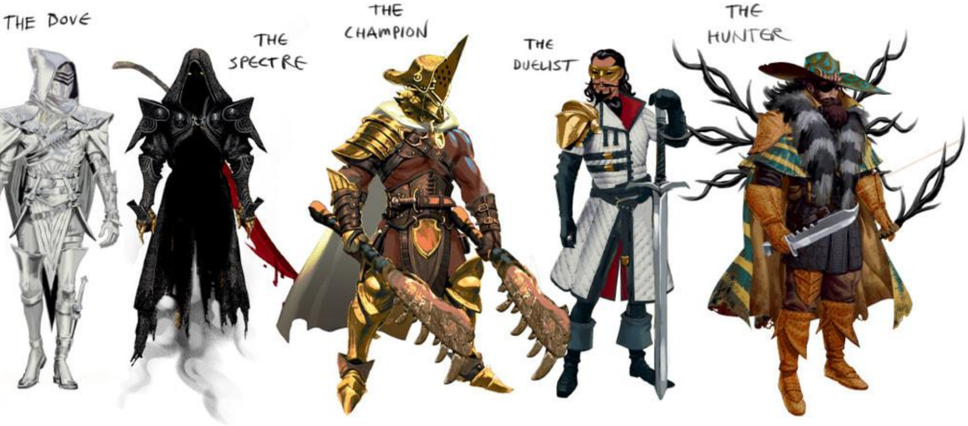
SCOUNDRELS

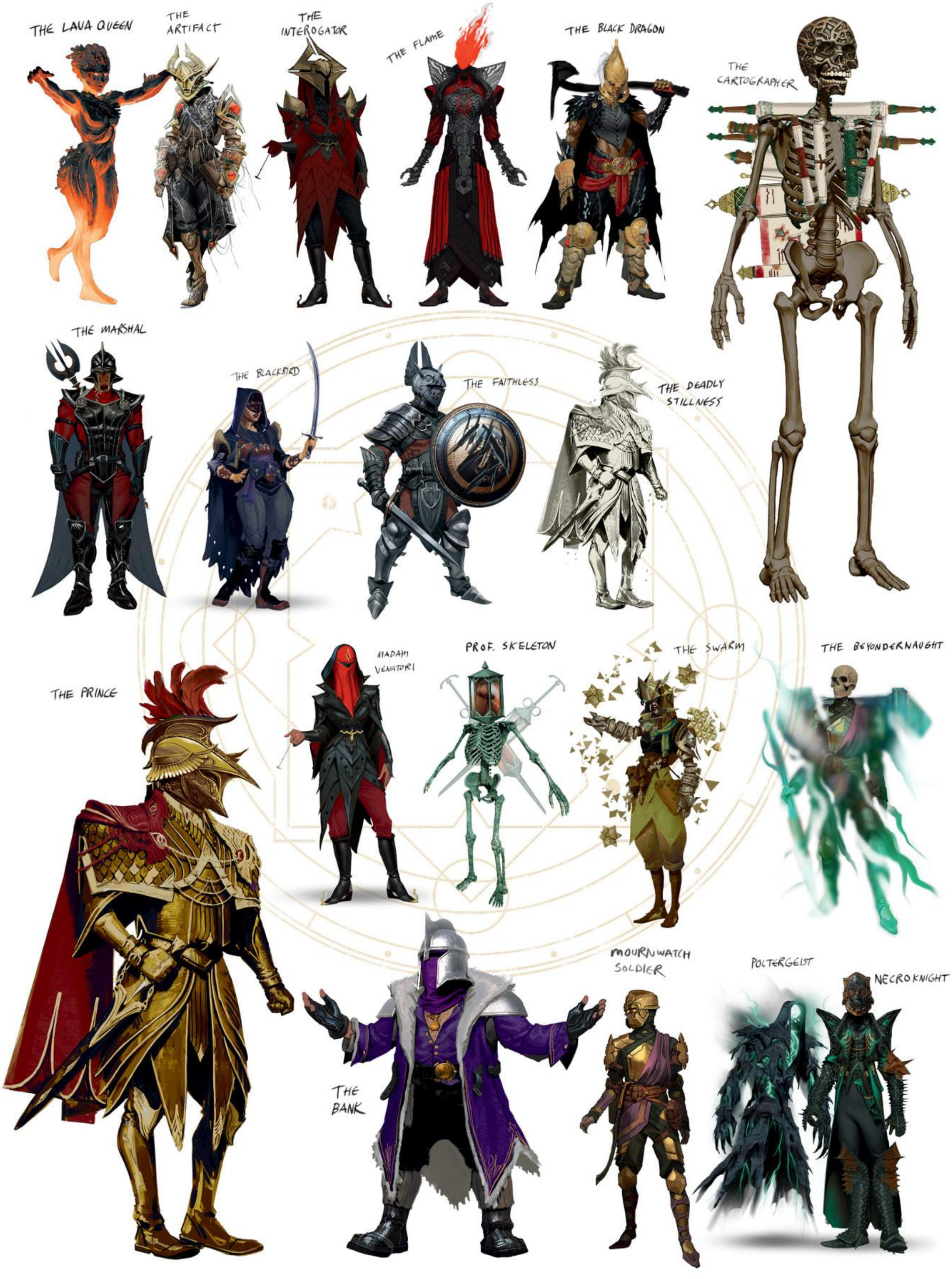
The scoundrels were an idea to add unique encounters to spice up combat and imply narrative depth. These would be like *Batman* B villains that cross your path, mess with you, and then run off to bother you another day. The main criteria was that they should be built using existing assets (some of the most rewarding work happens within extreme limitations).

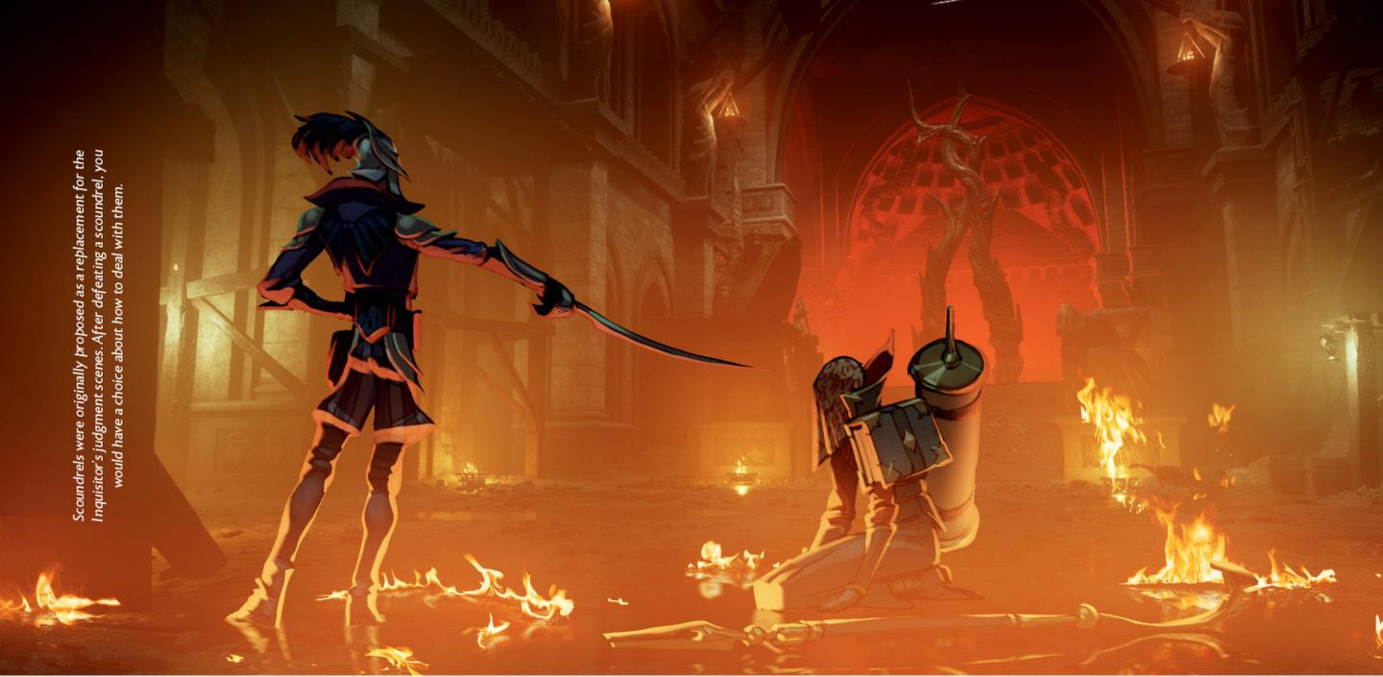

SON OF SKY WATCHER
THE BLACKSMITH
THE BLOOD WITCH
THE GOLDEN MERCENARY
THE PROFESSOR
THE LIBRARIAN
THE BEAST
THE OWL GANG
THE FOX
THE FIST


THE LIBRARIAN

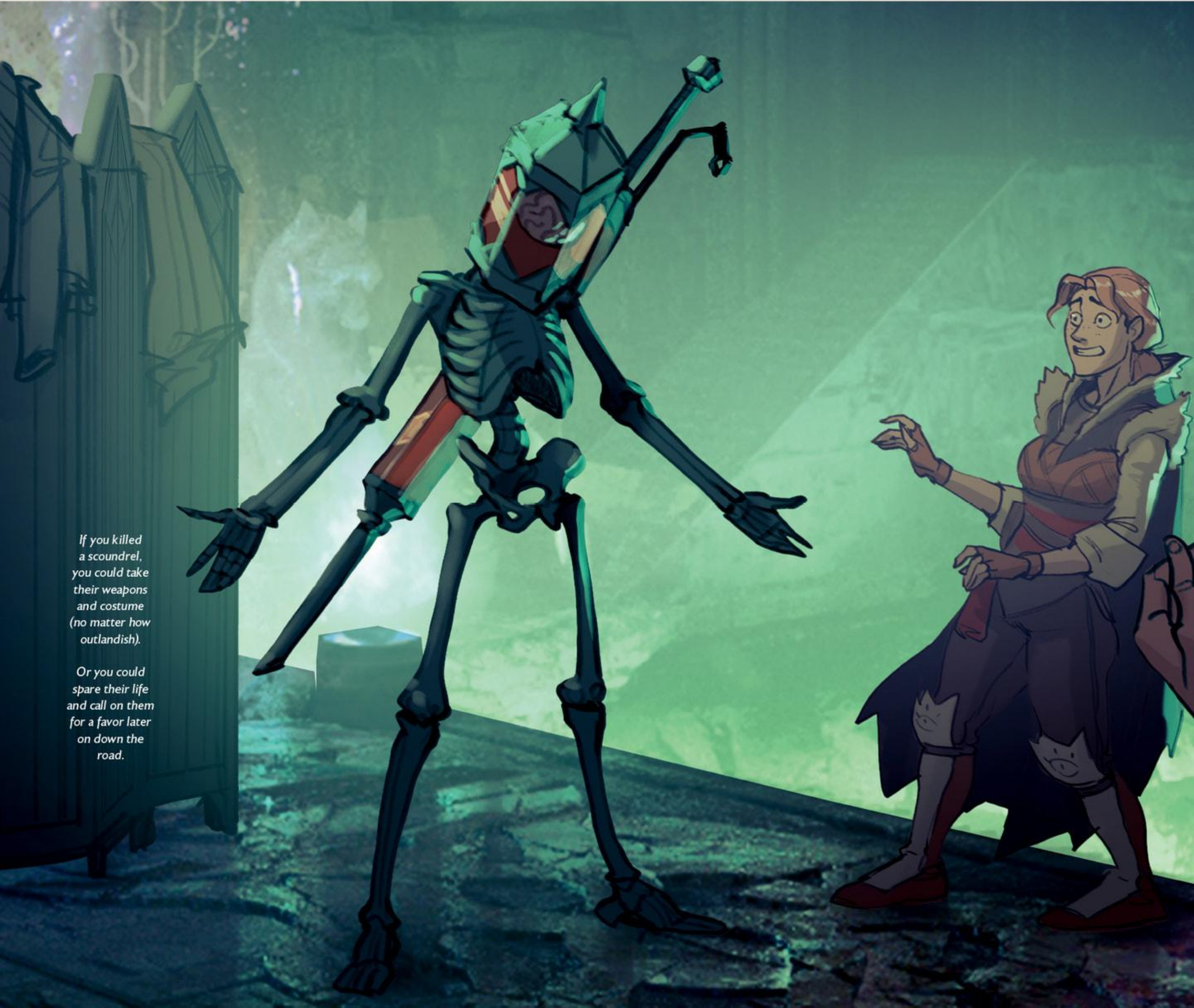
The hardest part about designing scoundrels is knowing you won't be able to build them all (yet).
We liked the idea of them joining forces and creating an "anti-party": a group that could specifically counter each of your followers.


THE DOVE
THE SPECTRE
THE CHAMPION
THE DUELIST
THE HUNTER


THE LAVA QUEEN
THE ARTIFACT
THE INTEROGATOR
THE FLAME
THE BLACK DRAGON
THE CARTOGRAPHER
THE MARSHAL
THE BLACKBIRD
THE FAITHLESS
THE DEADLY STILLNESS
MADAM VENATORI
PROF. SKELETON
THE SWARM
THE BEYONDERNAUGHT
THE PRINCE
MOURNWATCH SOLDIER
POLTERGEIST
NECROKNIGHT
THE BANK

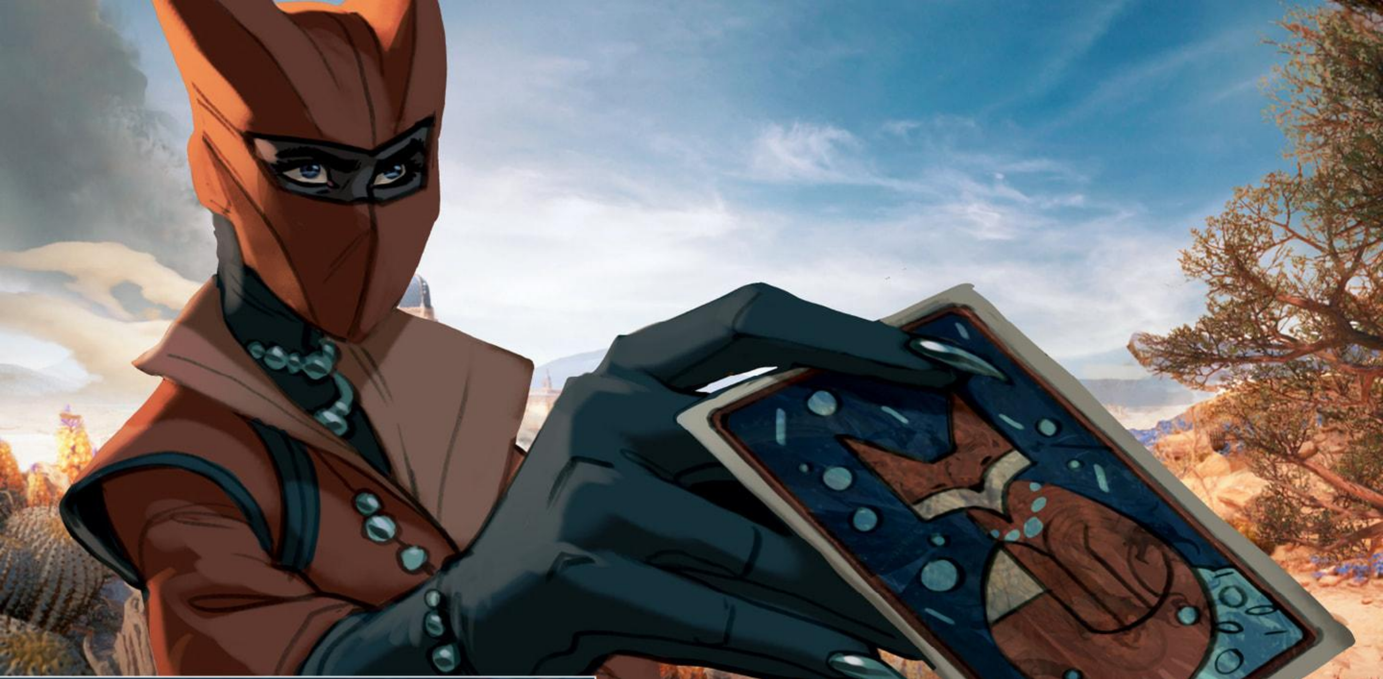


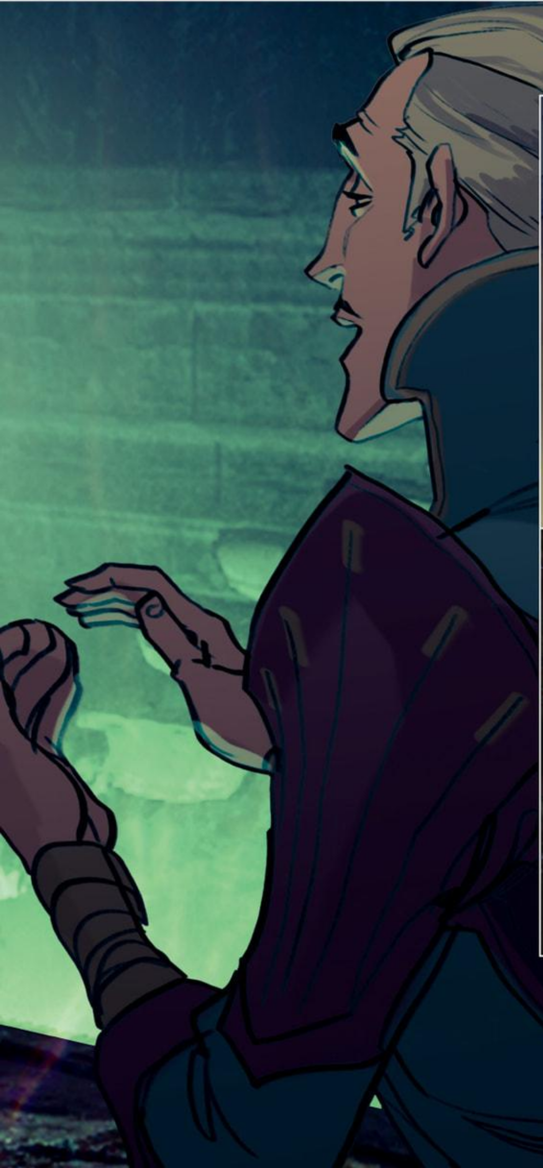
Scoundrels were originally proposed as a replacement for the Inquisitor's judgment scenes. After defeating a scoundrel, you would have a choice about how to deal with them.

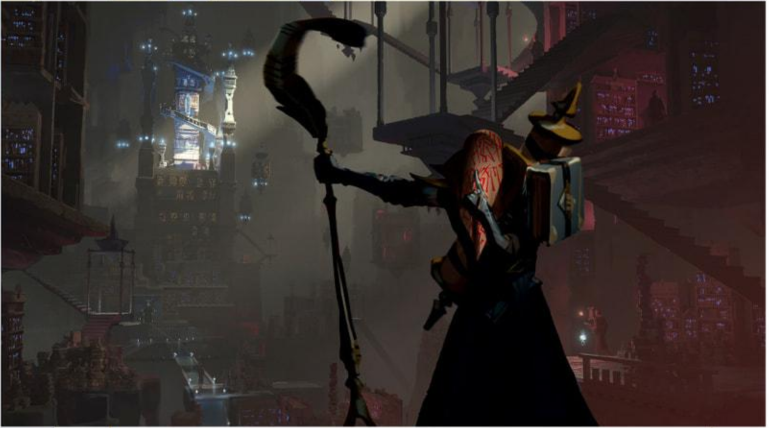


If you killed a scoundrel, you could take their weapons and costume (no matter how outlandish).

Or you could spare their life and call on them for a favor later on down the road.



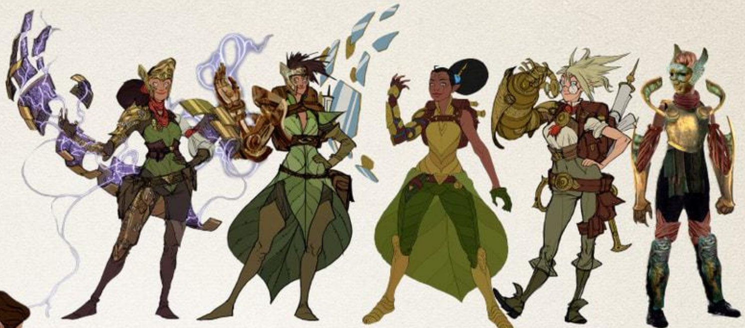




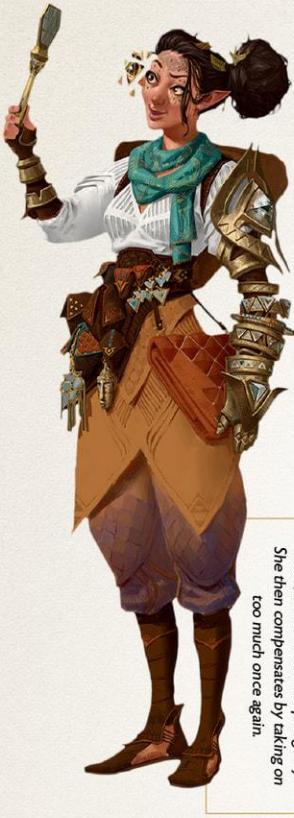
The scoundrels also offered the opportunity to give more faces to the various regions and factions of Thedas. Tevinter libraries may be vast, but how much more vast do they seem if they produce a scoundrel like "the Librarian"?

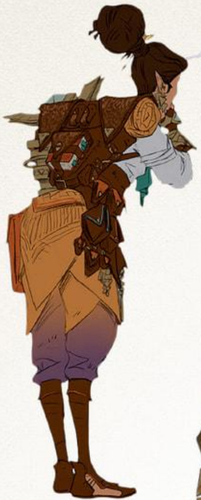
BELLARA

Bellara is a Dalish technomancer. When the elven gods emerged, the blighted energy that they brought caused previously dormant elven artifacts to come to life, and Bellara focused her energy on learning how they worked for the benefit of both her fellow Dalish elves and her teammates.

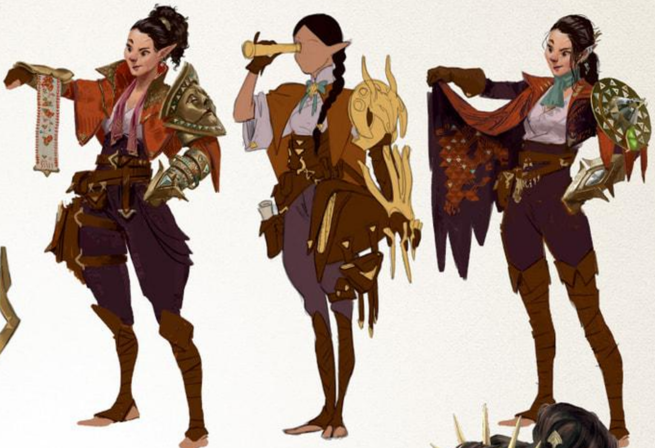


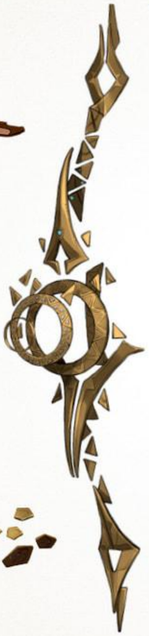
The first sketches of Bellara started with the description "Jules Verne dork."

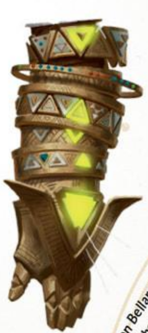


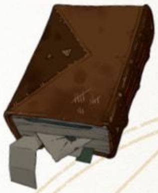


She's very intense. She tries to be focused—but attempts too many things at once and ends up getting overwhelmed and not doing any of them, which makes her feel guilty. She then compensates by taking on too much once again.

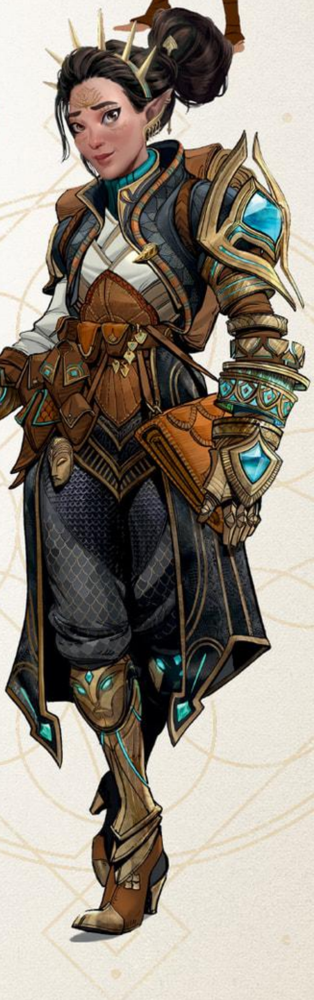


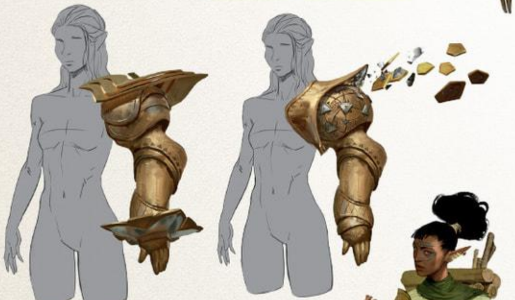


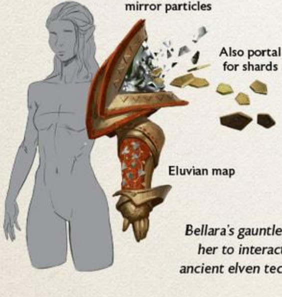




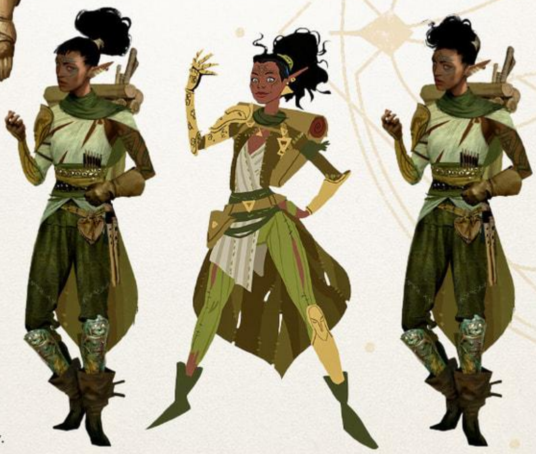
The rings on Bellara's gauntlet rotate and then lock in place.

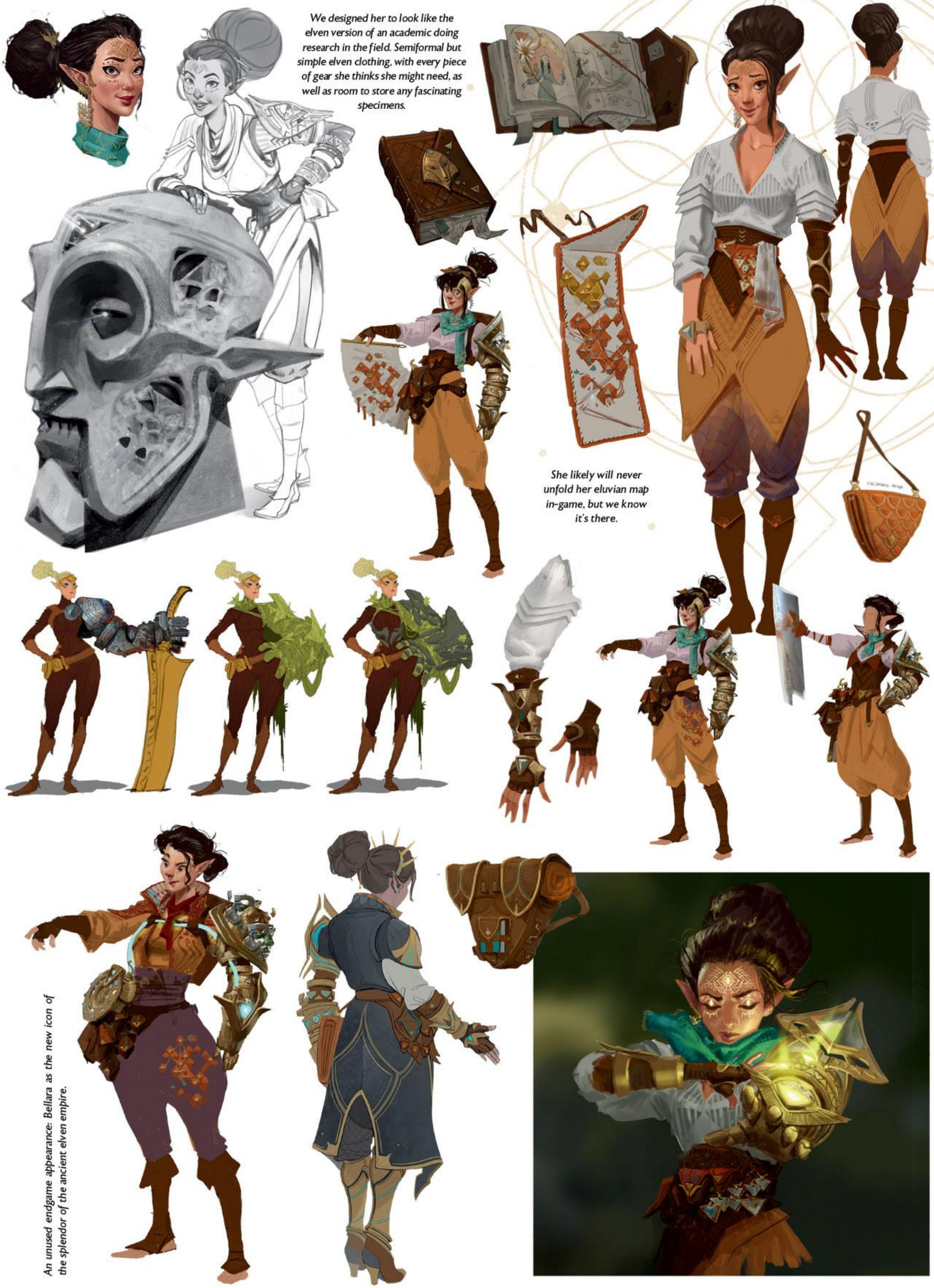






Bellara's gauntlet allows her to interact with ancient elven technology.

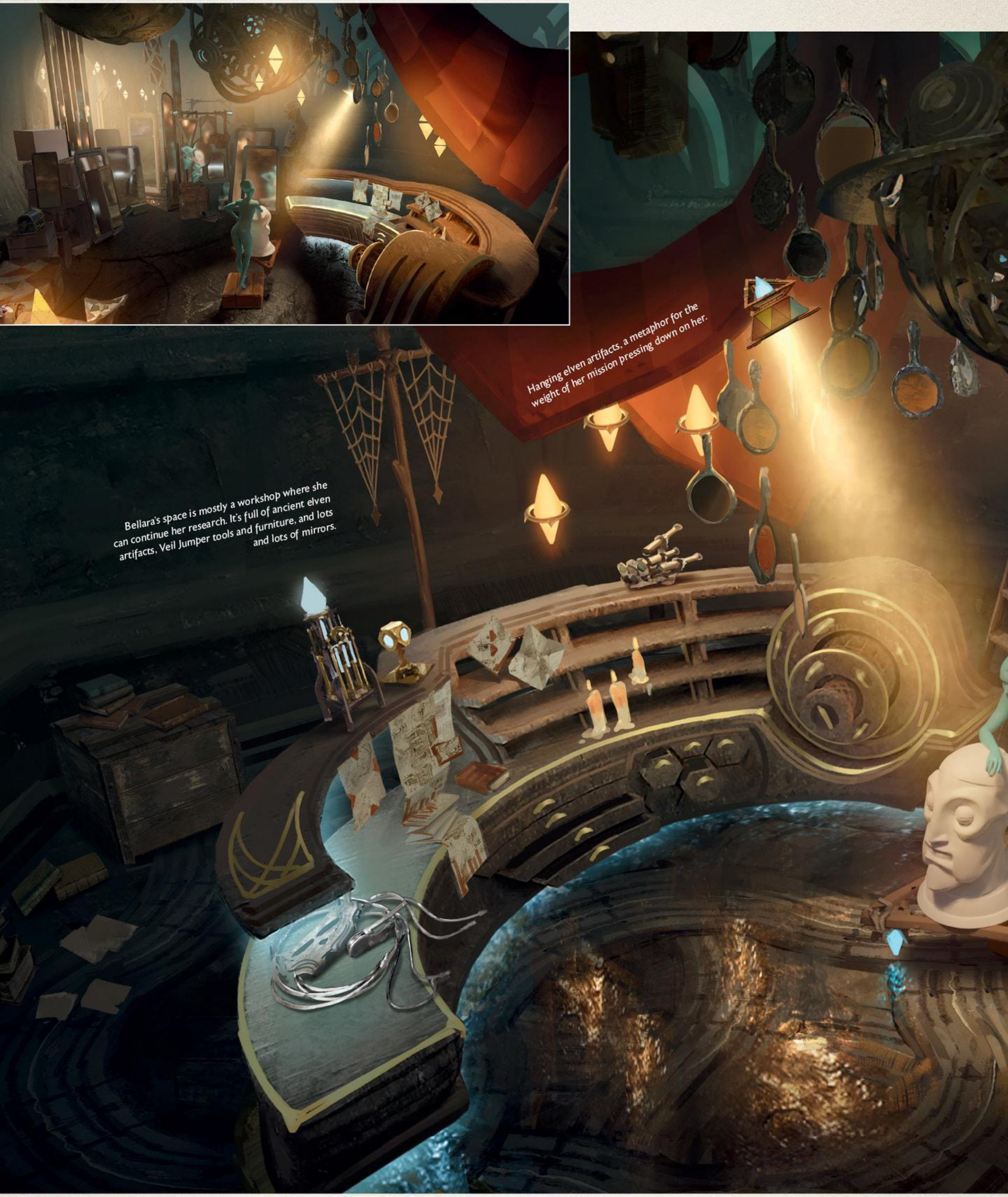




We designed her to look like the elven version of an academic doing research in the field. Semiformal but simple elven clothing, with every piece of gear she thinks she might need, as well as room to store any fascinating specimens.

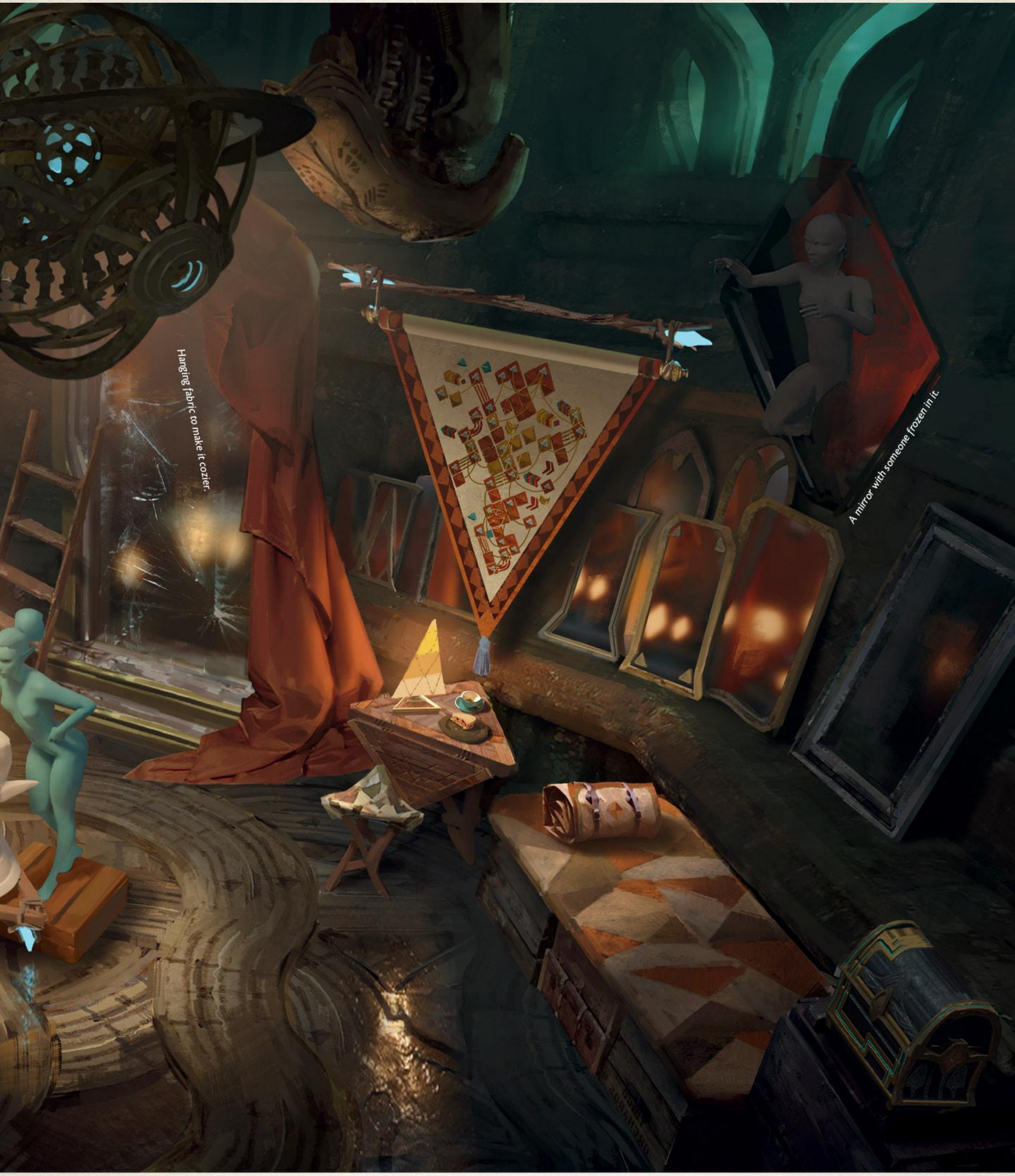
She likely will never unfold her eluvian map in-game, but we know it's there.

An unused endgame appearance: Bellara as the new icon of the splendor of the ancient elven empire.



Hanging elven artifacts, a metaphor for the weight of her mission pressing down on her.

Bellara's space is mostly a workshop where she can continue her research. It's full of ancient elven artifacts, Veil Jumper tools and furniture, and lots and lots of mirrors.



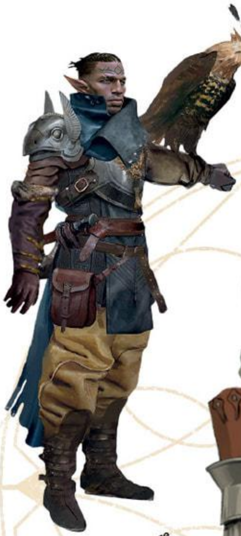
Hanging fabric to make it cozier.

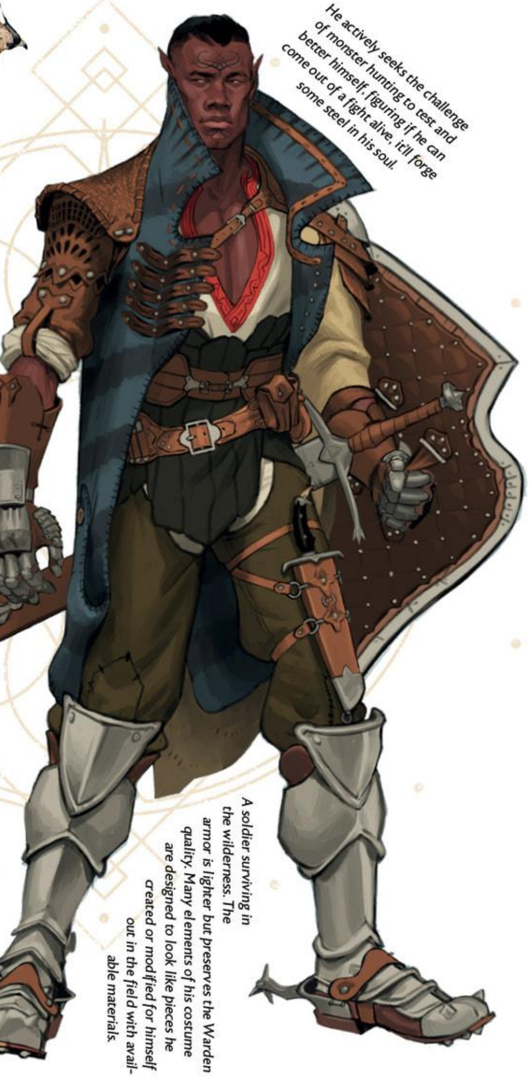
A mirror with someone frozen in it.

DAVRIN

He's an elf in his early thirties, but not a delicate, refined one. He's a monster slayer, tougher than your usual elf in stature and demeanor. Davrin is a seasoned veteran trying to nurture good in a world that keeps throwing evil at him.

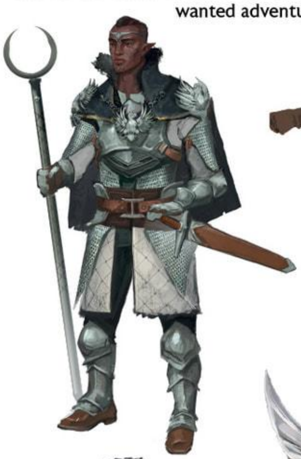
There's a confidence in him that comes from knowing he's good at what he does. He broke away from his elven clan in his teens because the insularity stifled him. He wanted adventure.

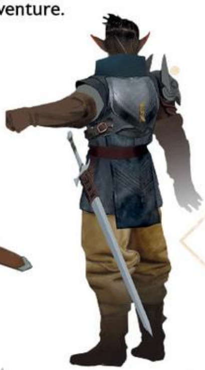




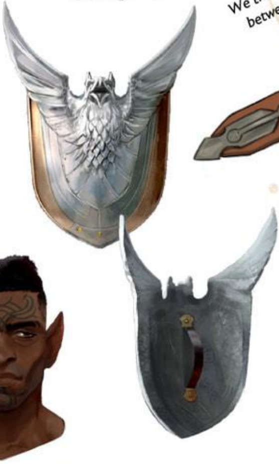
He actively seeks the challenge of monster hunting to test and better himself, figuring if he can come out of a fight alive, it'll forge some steel in his soul.

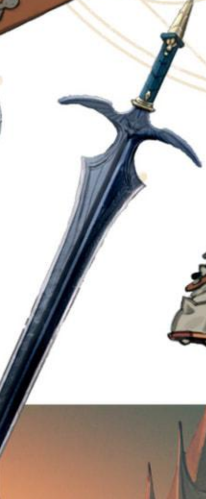
A soldier surviving in the wilderness. The armor is lighter but preserves the Warden quality. Many elements of his costume are designed to look like pieces he created or modified for himself out in the field with available materials.

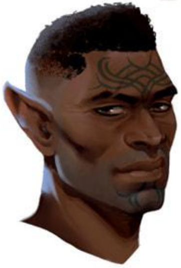


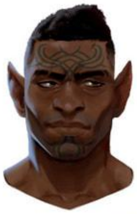


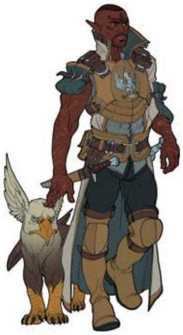
We tried to find the right balance between his elven past and his Warden present.

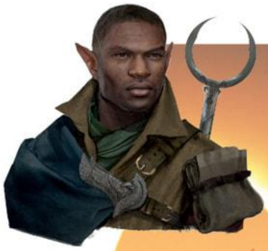


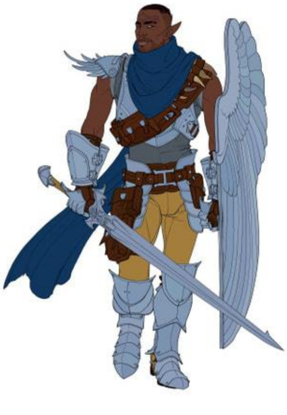


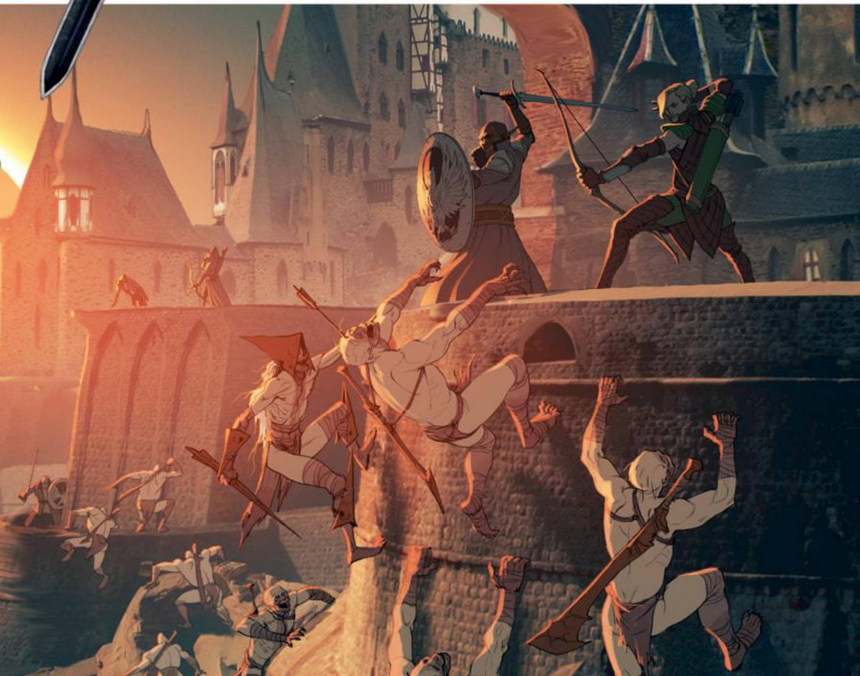




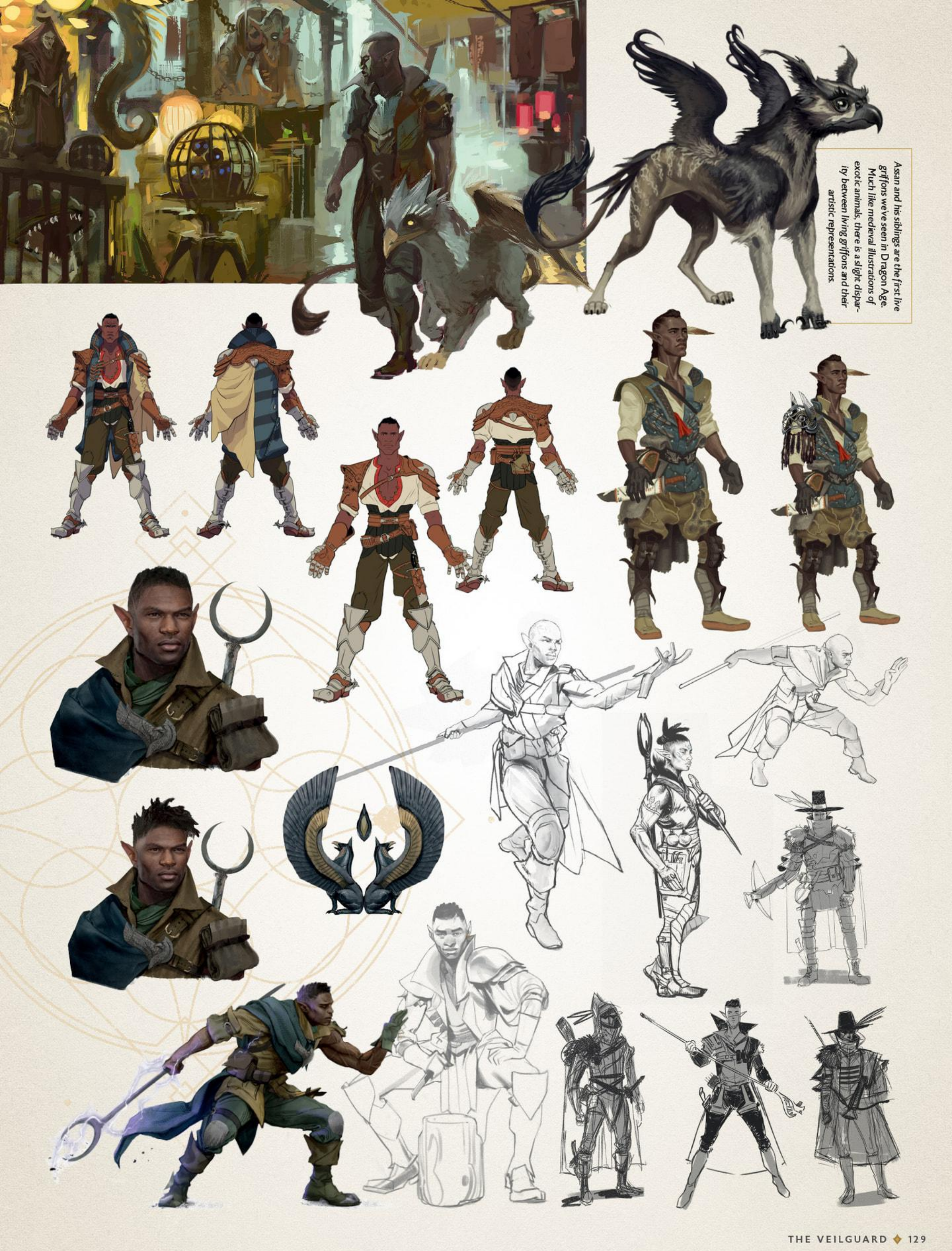




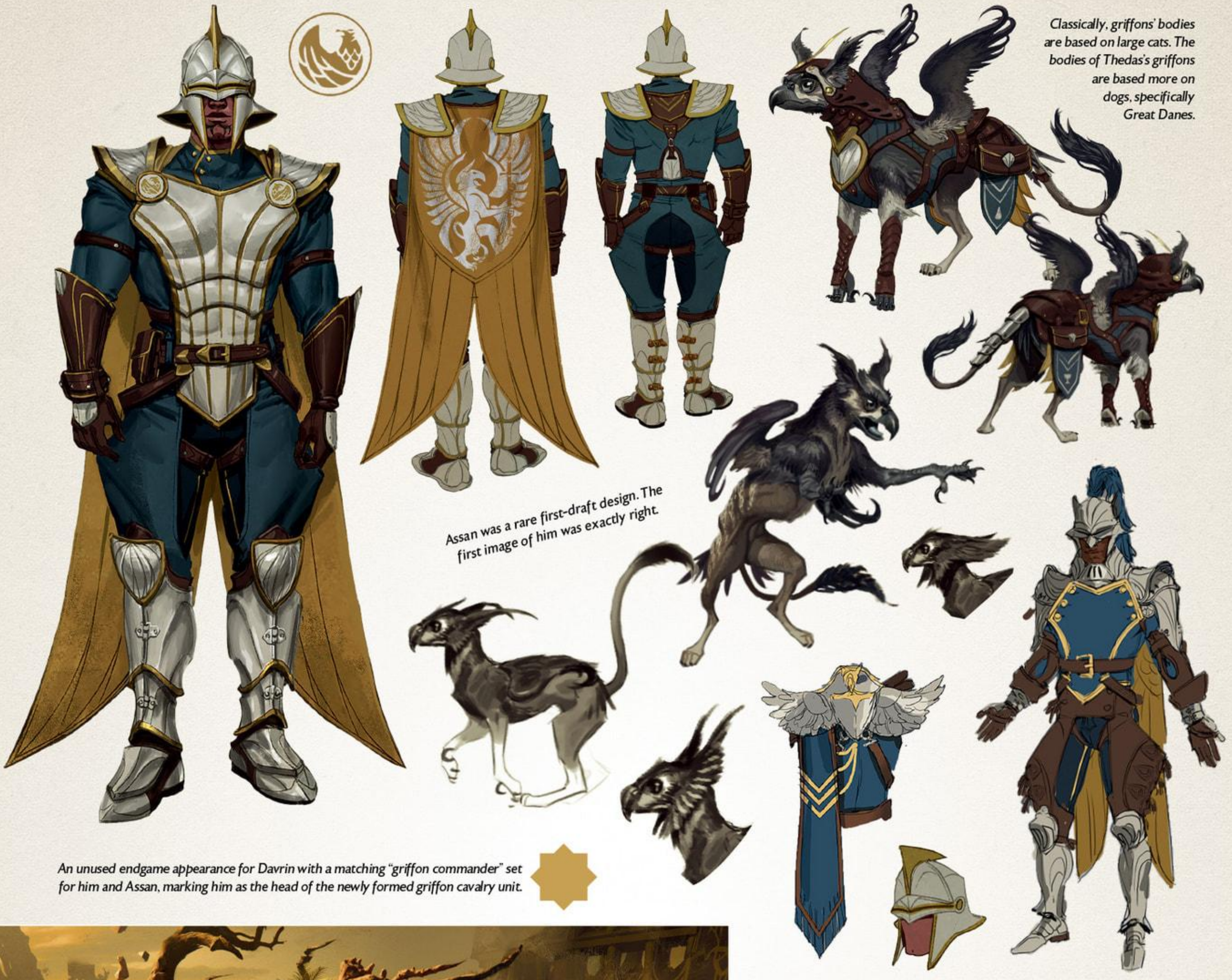




Fighting Elgar'nan's darkspawn at Weisshaupt.



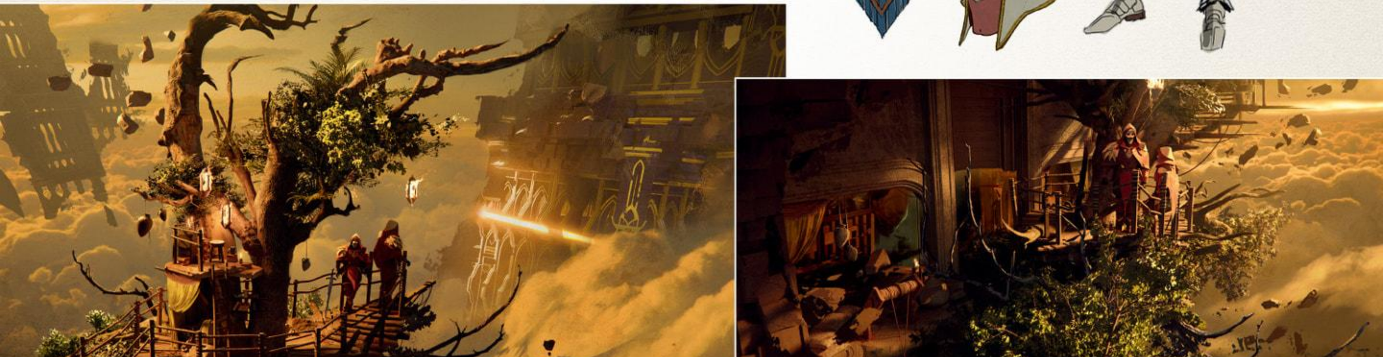
Assan and his siblings are the first live griffons we've seen in Dragon Age. Much like medieval illustrations of exotic animals, there is a slight disparity between living griffons and their artistic representations.

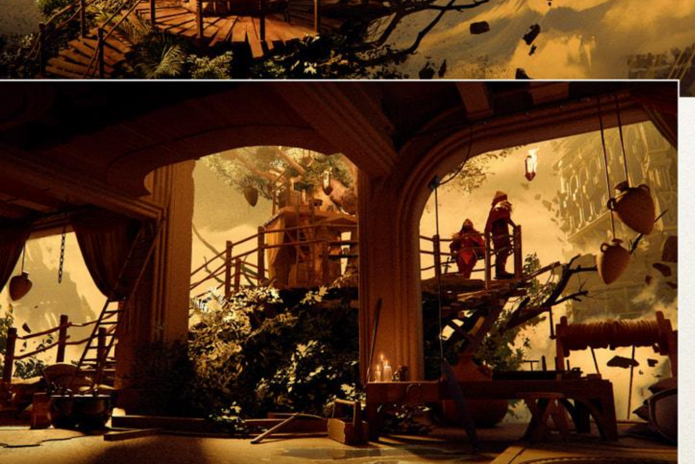


Classically, griffons' bodies are based on large cats. The bodies of Thedas's griffons are based more on dogs, specifically Great Danes.

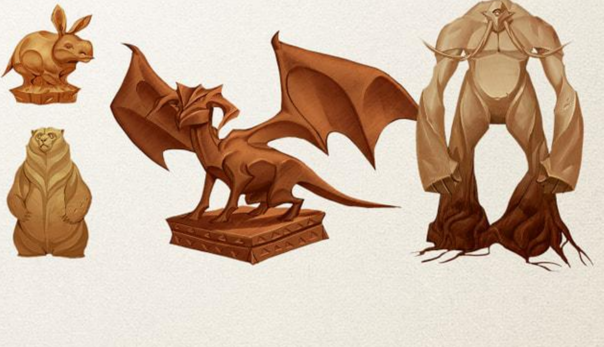
Assan was a rare first-draft design. The first image of him was exactly right.

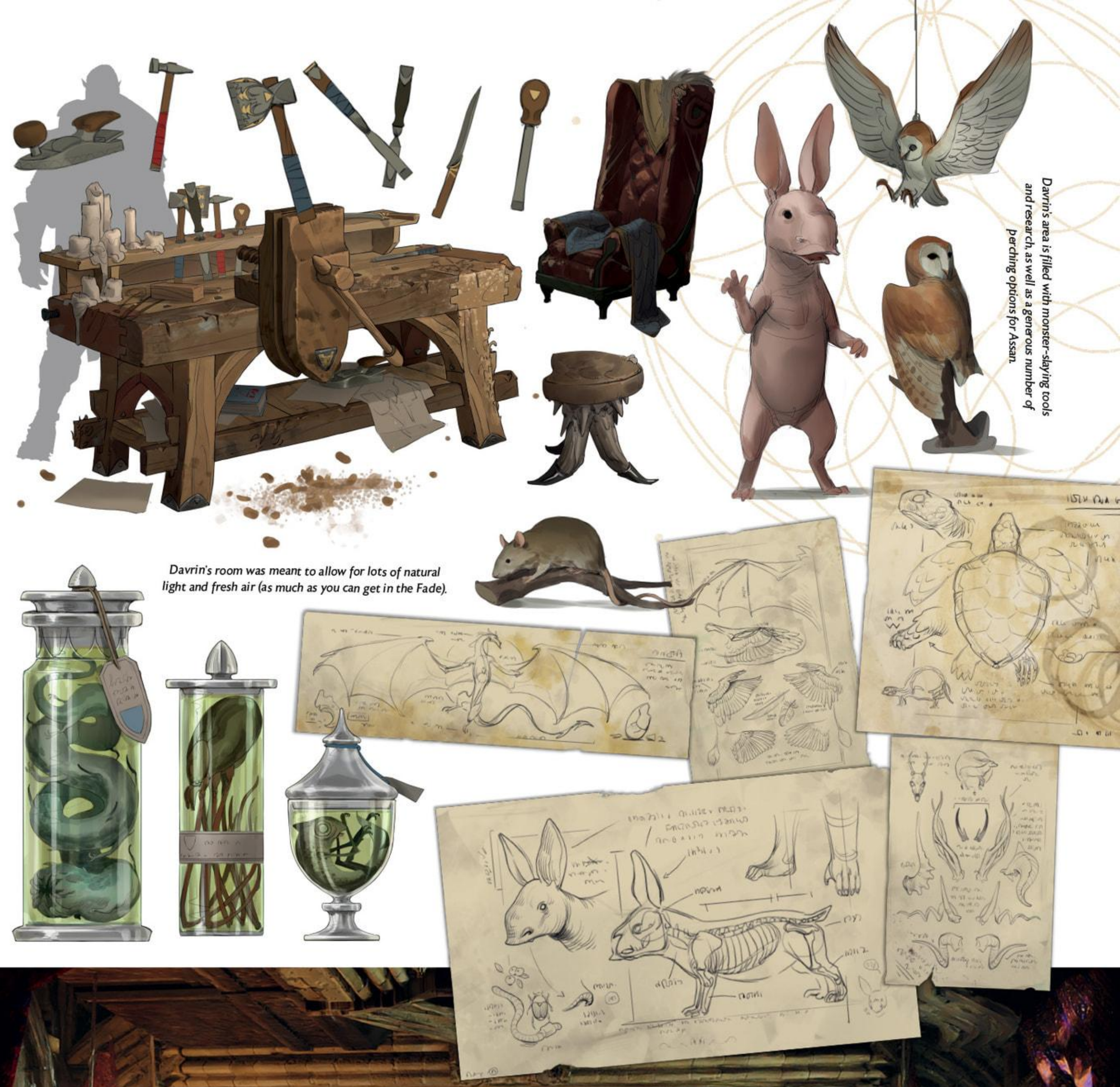
An unused endgame appearance for Davrin with a matching "griffon commander" set for him and Assan, marking him as the head of the newly formed griffon cavalry unit.





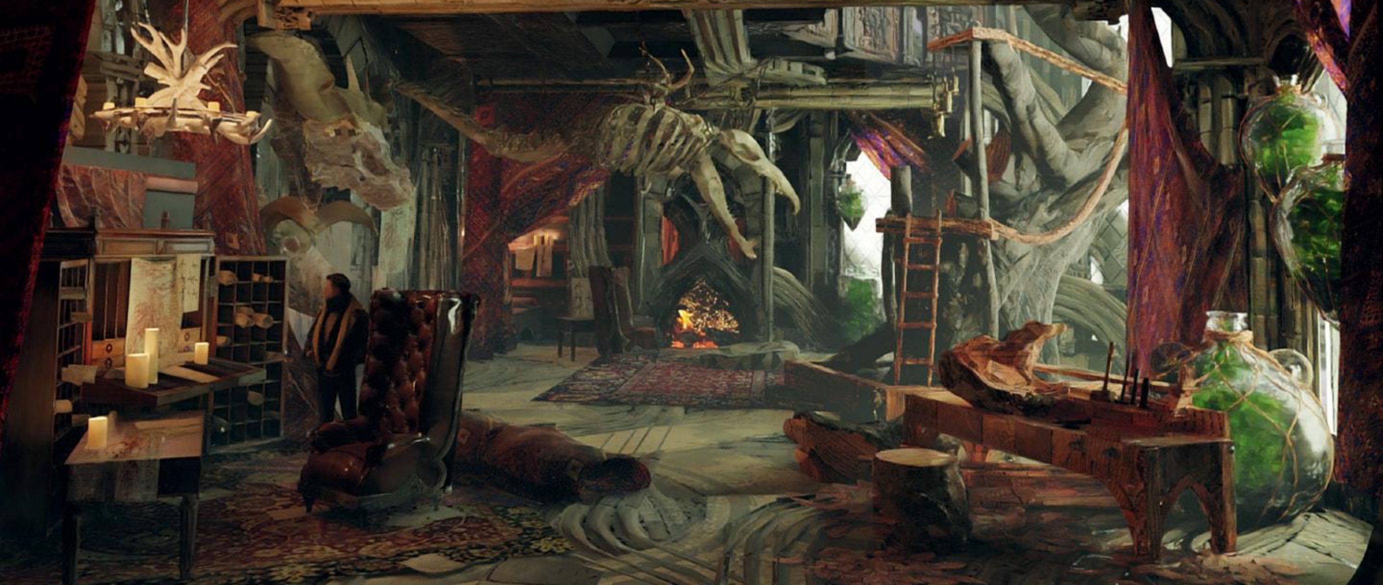
Each one of Davrin's carvings represents countless hours of tracking, studying, and hunting—a symbol of his accomplishments as he carves his way through the monster world, beast by beast.





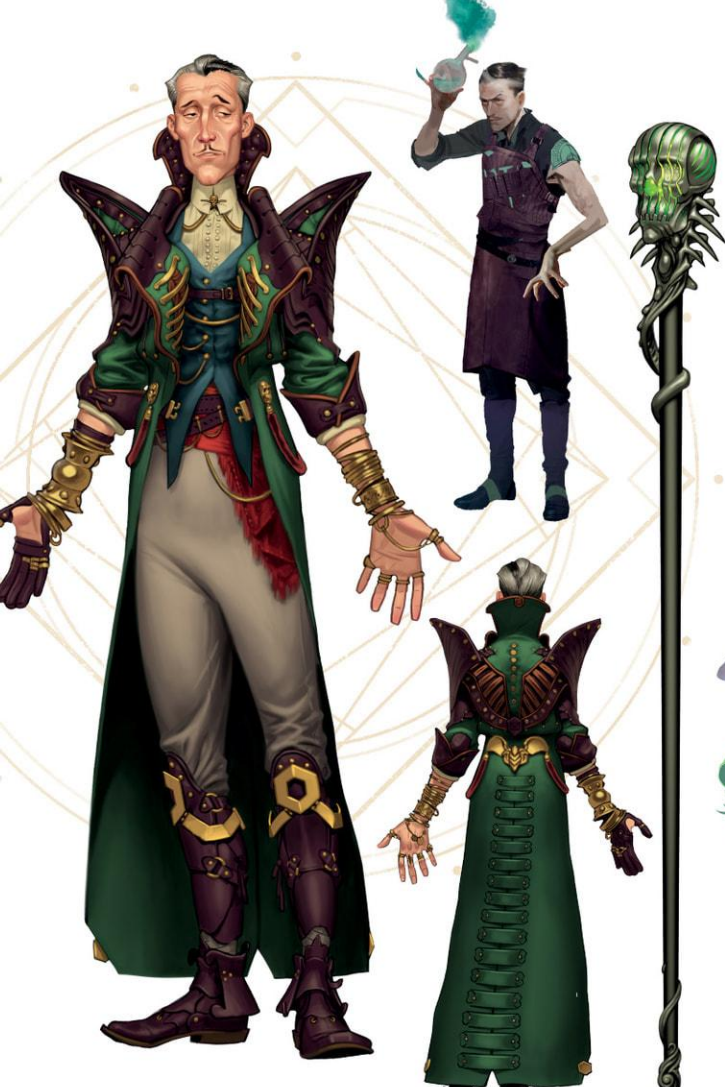
Davrin's area is filled with monster-slaying tools and research, as well as a generous number of perching options for Assan.

Davrin's room was meant to allow for lots of natural light and fresh air (as much as you can get in the Fade).

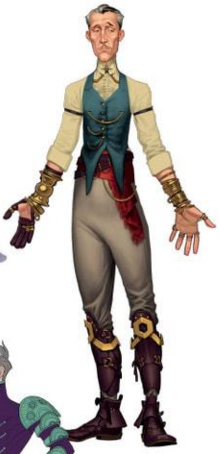


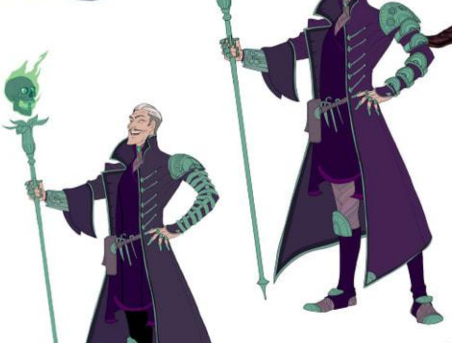
EMMRICH

Emmrich is a professor specializing in death magic, hexes, and necromancy. Despite his mastery of dark arts, Emmrich is a friendly, energetic man who loves company and adventure. Deeply curious about everything, especially magic, he's kept himself active by exploring the dangerous catacombs underneath his city and can more than handle himself in a fight. He's part of the Mourn Watch, an elite group of necromancers who protect the world of the living from occult horrors.

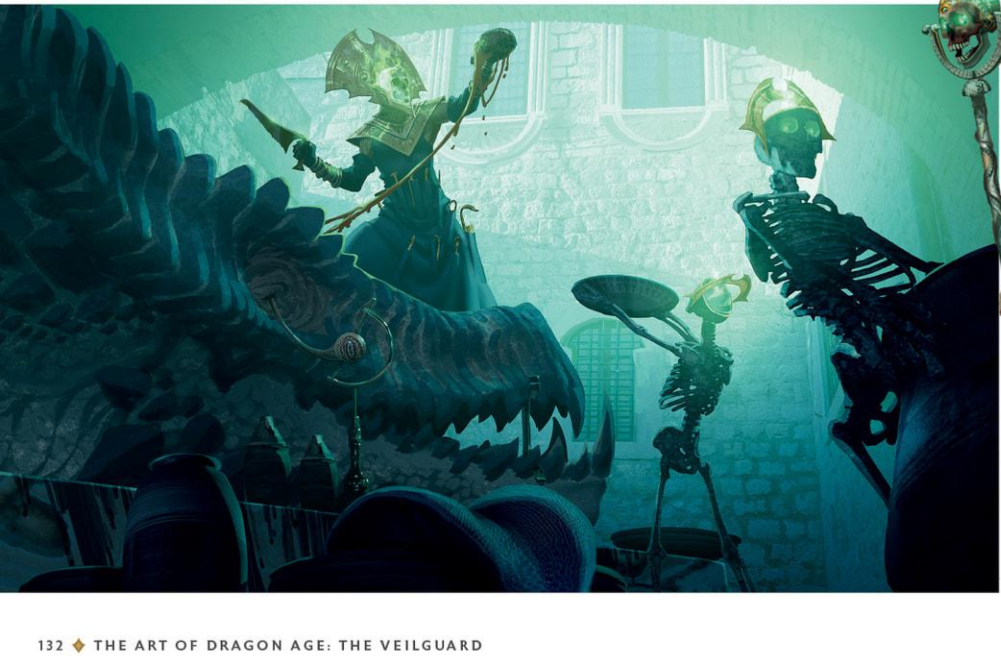


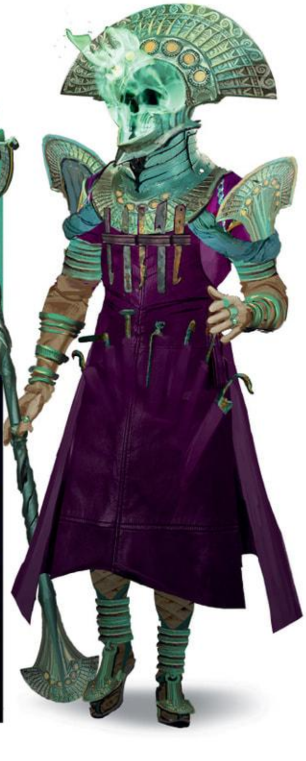
For his outfit, we explored a combination of academic, mortician, and conductor.

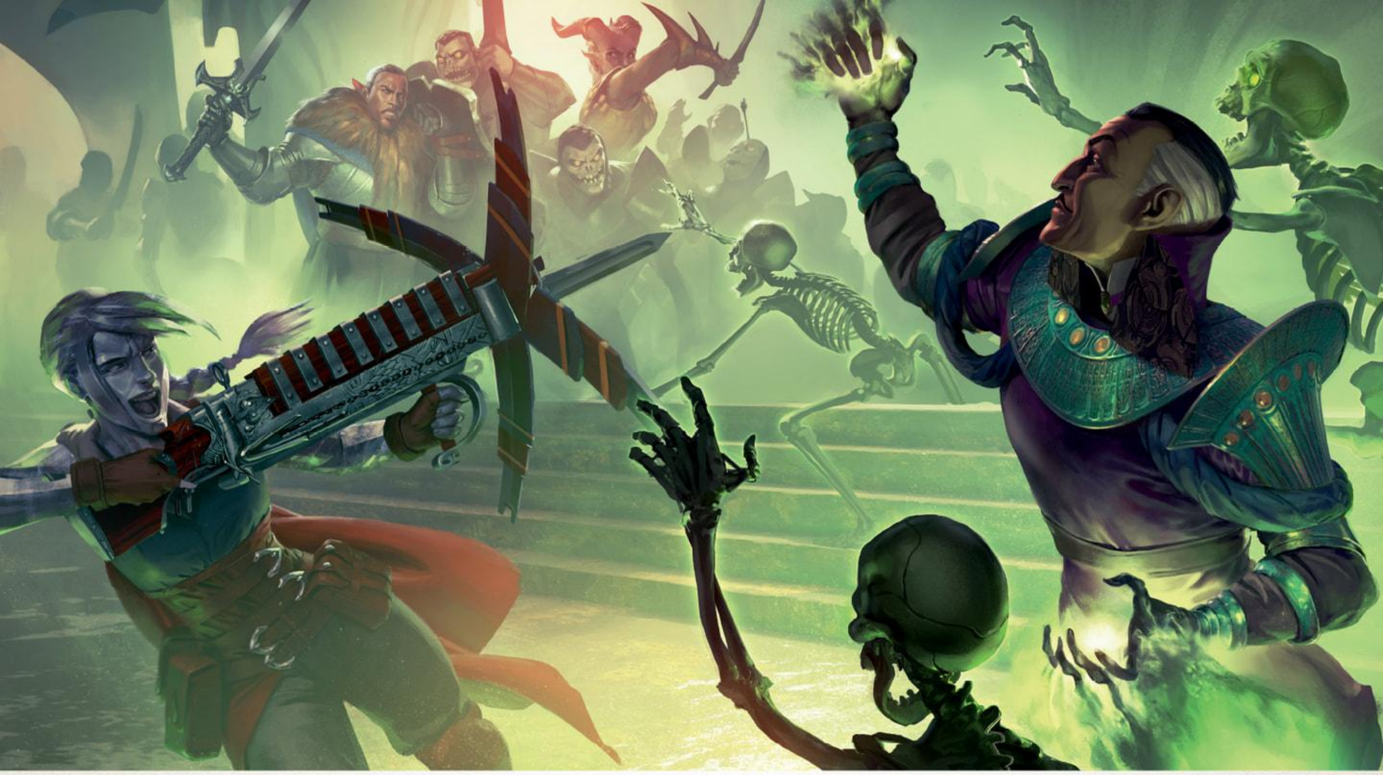


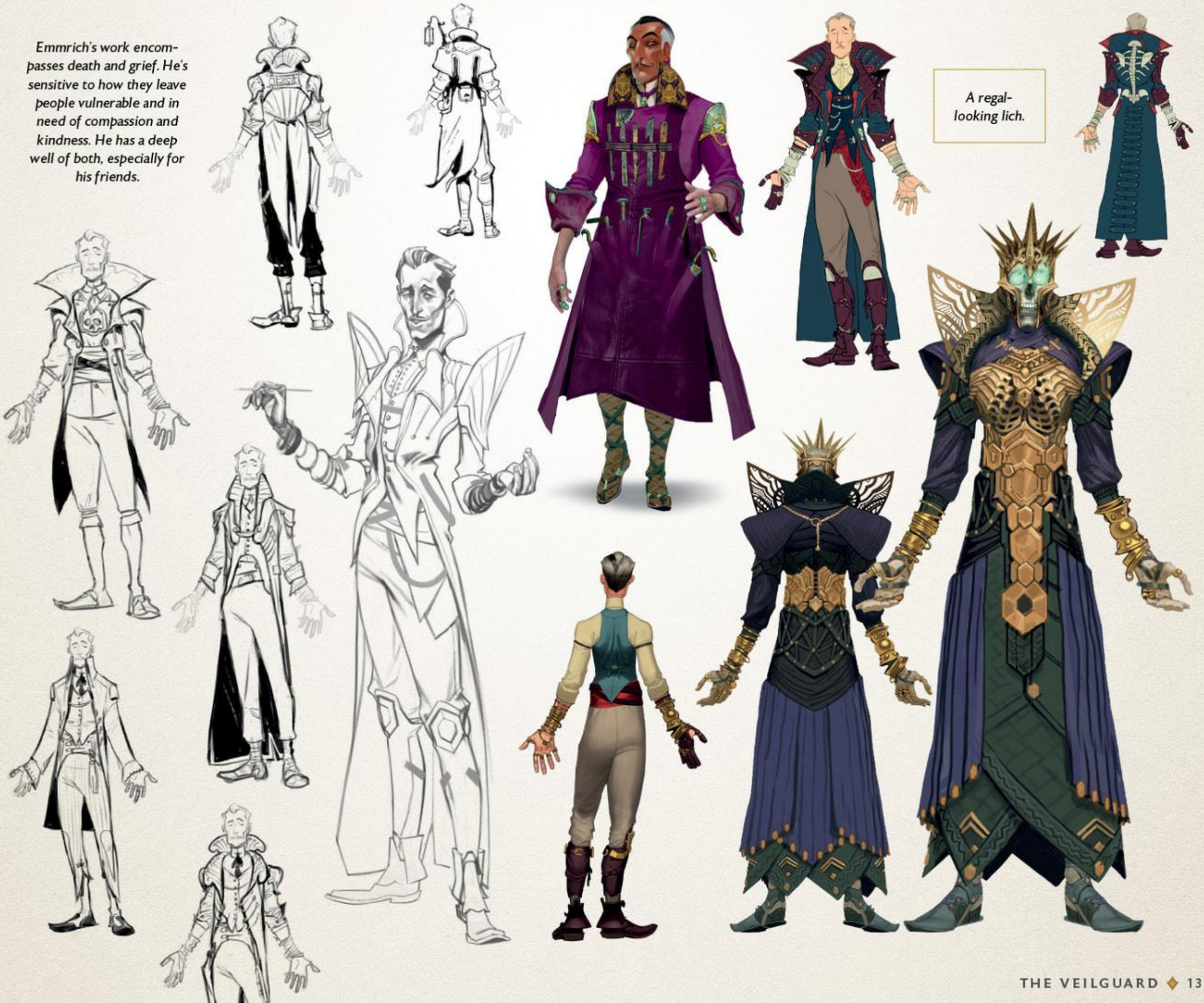


Emmrich is a very emotive talker; he gesticulates, underlines points with his hands, etc. His enthusiasm comes through transparently in his body language.



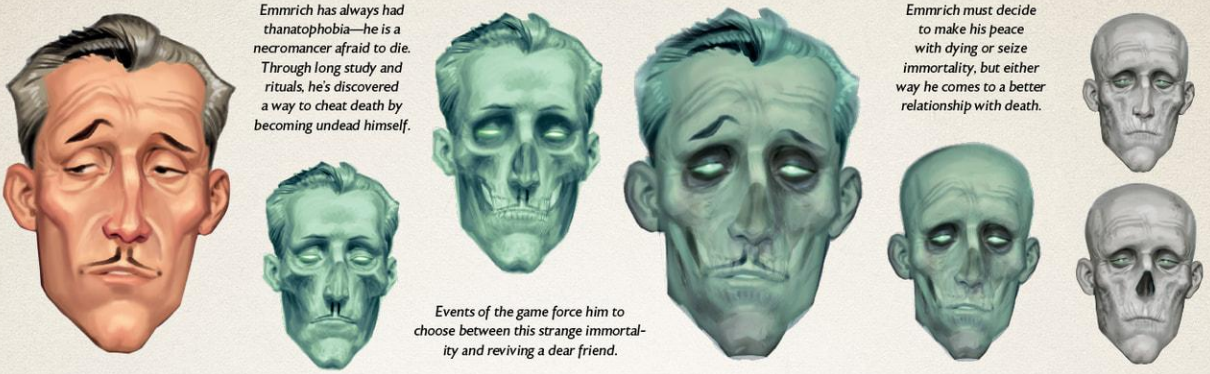






Emmrich's work encompasses death and grief. He's sensitive to how they leave people vulnerable and in need of compassion and kindness. He has a deep well of both, especially for his friends.

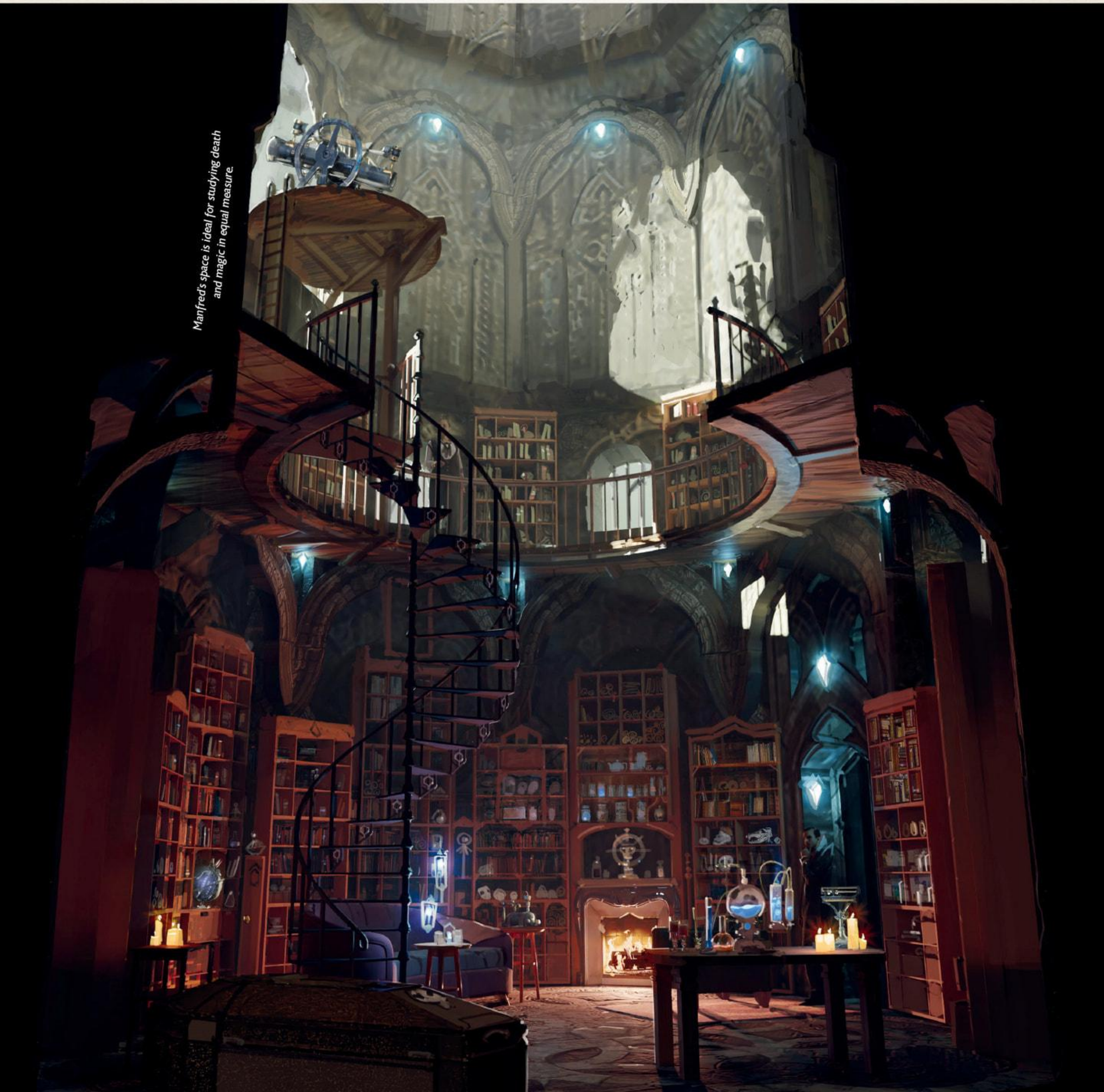
A regal-looking lich.



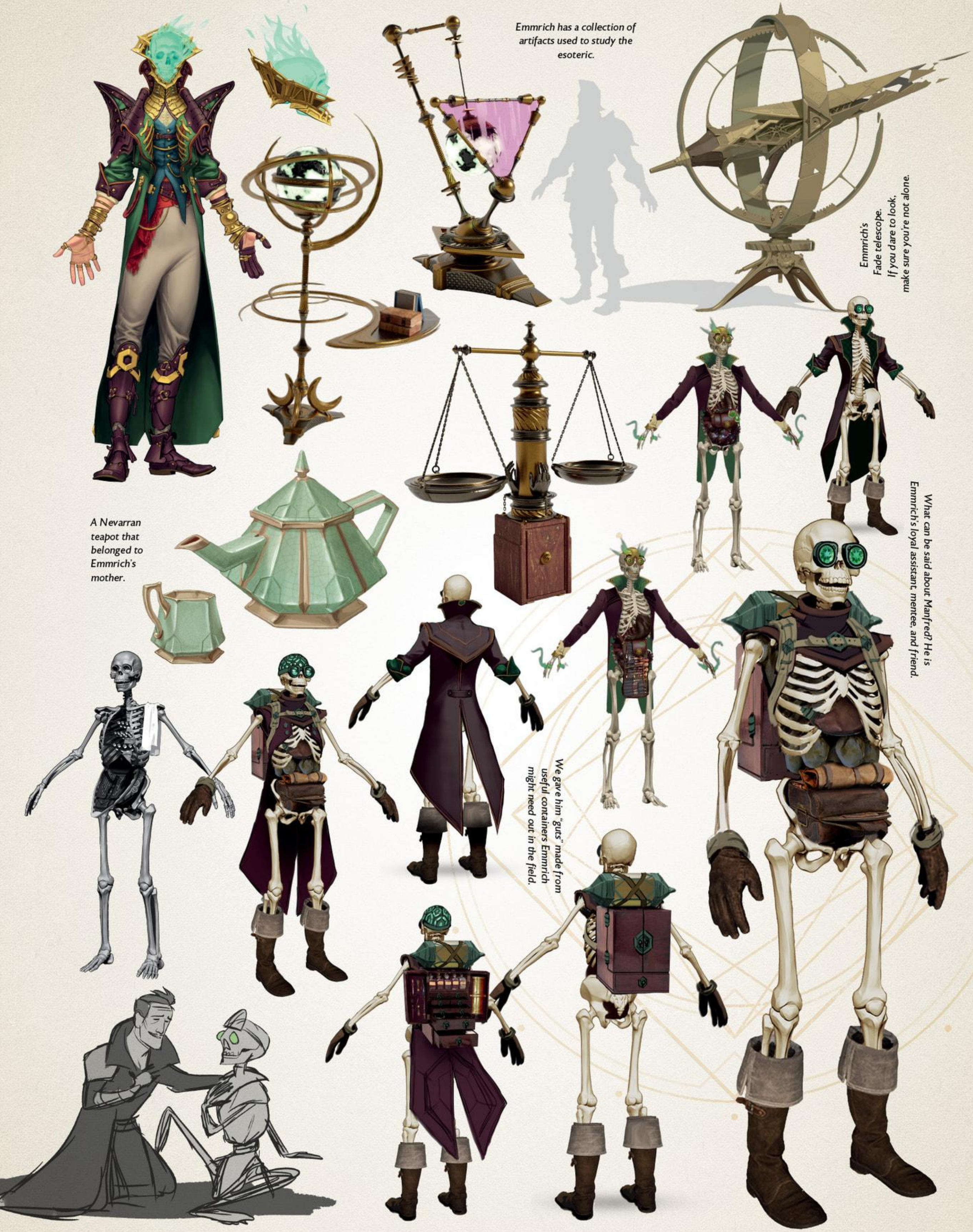
Emmrich has always had thanatophobia—he is a necromancer afraid to die. Through long study and rituals, he's discovered a way to cheat death by becoming undead himself.

Events of the game force him to choose between this strange immortality and reviving a dear friend.

Emmrich must decide to make his peace with dying or seize immortality, but either way he comes to a better relationship with death.



Manfred's space is ideal for studying death and magic in equal measure.



Emmrich has a collection of artifacts used to study the esoteric.

Emmrich's Fade telescope. If you dare to look, make sure you're not alone.

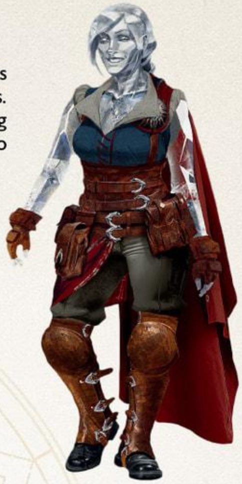
A Nevarran teapot that belonged to Emmrich's mother.

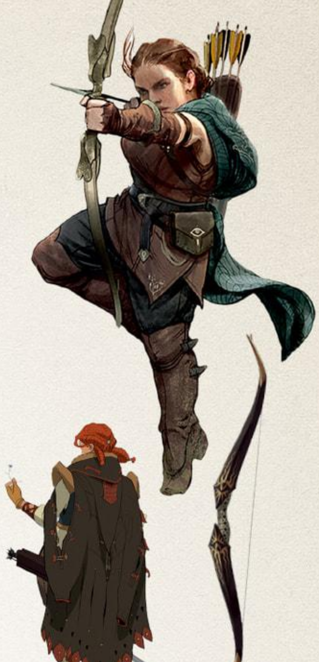
What can be said about Manfred? He is Emmrich's loyal assistant, mentee, and friend.

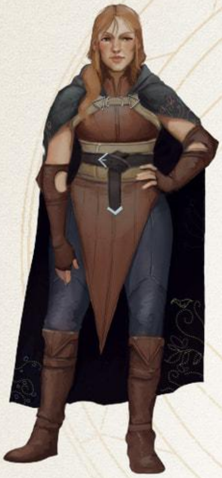
We gave him "guts" made from useful containers Emmrich might need out in the field.

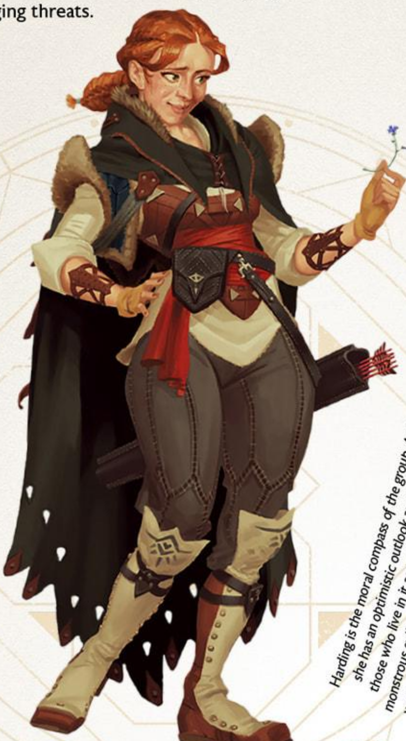
HARDING

The dwarf scout from *Dragon Age: Inquisition*. The girl next door that develops mysterious, powerful abilities connected to the ancient past of her fellow dwarves. Compassionate and cheerful, she is the heart and conscience of the team. Harding strives to remain true to herself and her humble upbringing even as she is flung into darkness and world-changing threats.

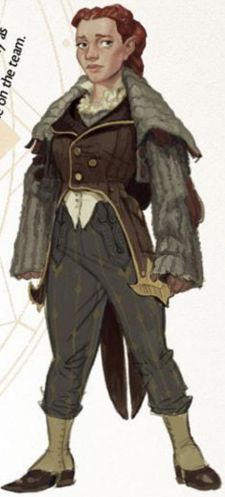


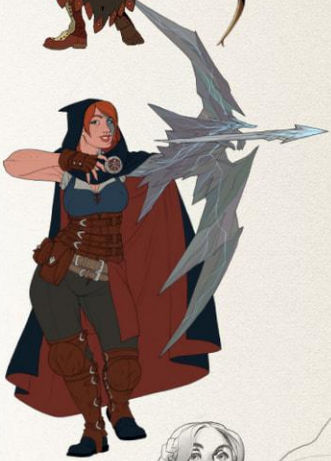


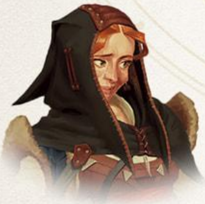


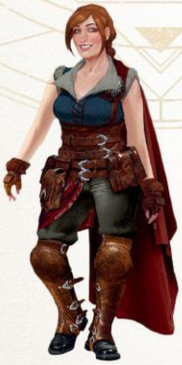


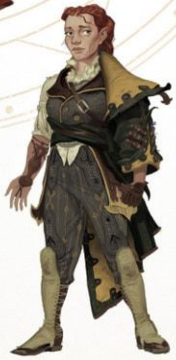
Harding is the moral compass of the group. A kind woman, she has an optimistic outlook and views the world and those who live in it as inherently good, even as she faces monstrous evils. She does not view attributes like empathy as weaknesses but strengths. A friend to everyone on the team.

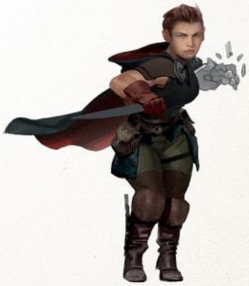


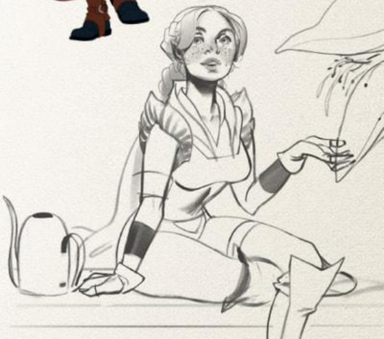


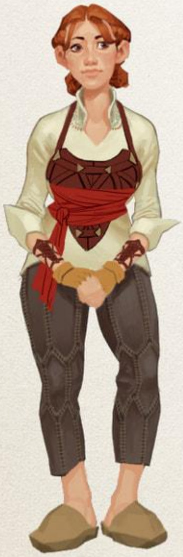


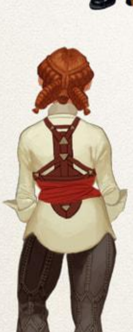


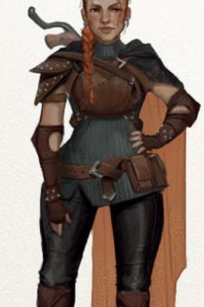




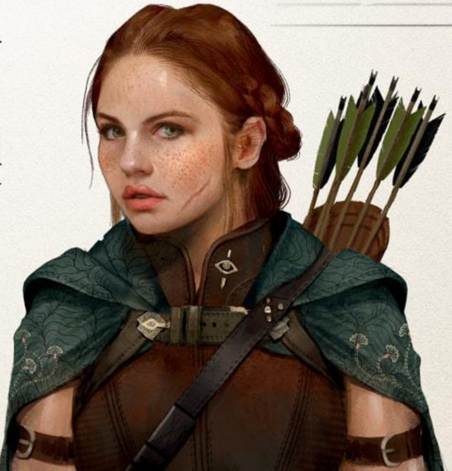


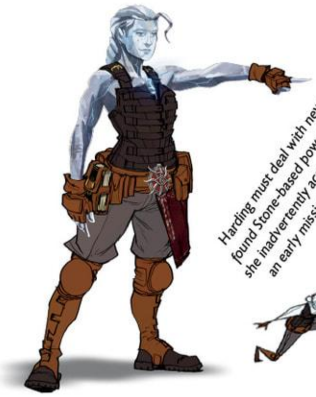




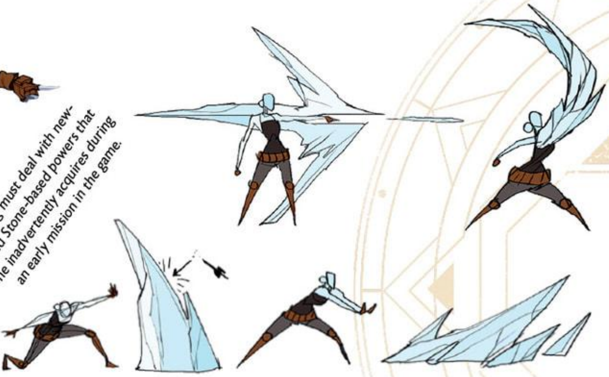


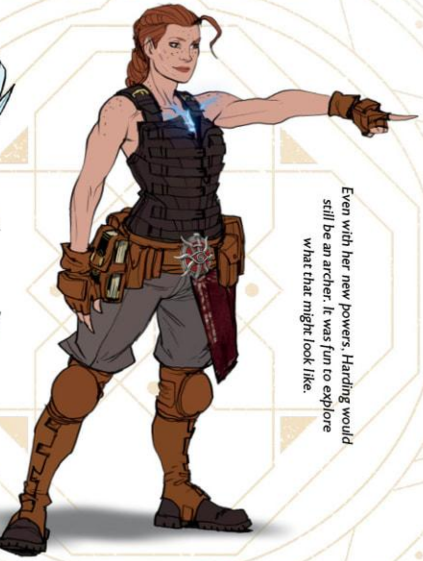
We tried to make Harding's outfit an evolution of an Inquisition uniform. We imagined her on a mission, waiting for days in a sniper perch, biding her time by embroidering beautiful patterns into her sniper cloak.





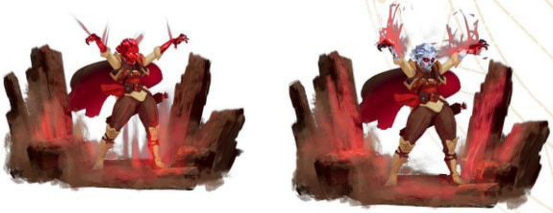
Harding must deal with new-found Stone-based powers that she inadvertently acquires during an early mission in the game.



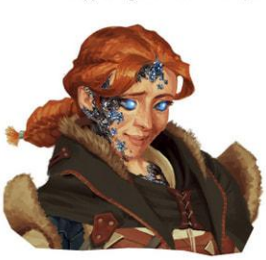


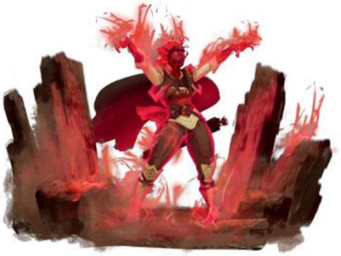
Even with her new powers, Harding would still be an archer. It was fun to explore what that might look like.

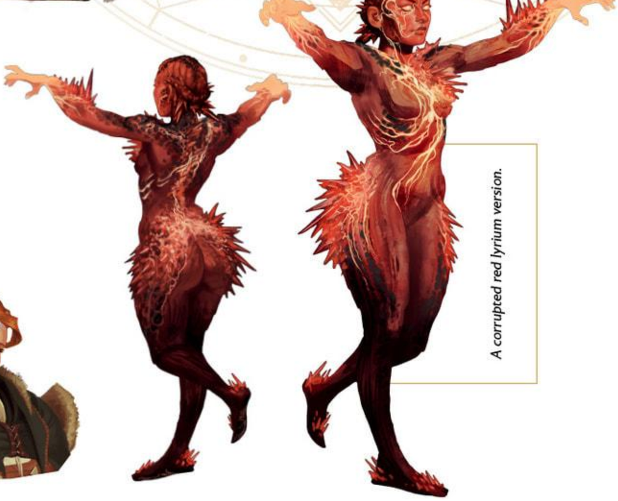
In the early stages, Harding's Stone powers were more extreme, including her skin transforming during combat.



It was challenging to make the stone skin look appealing and not like an infection.

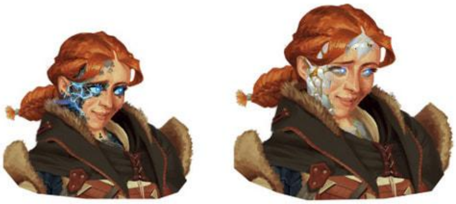


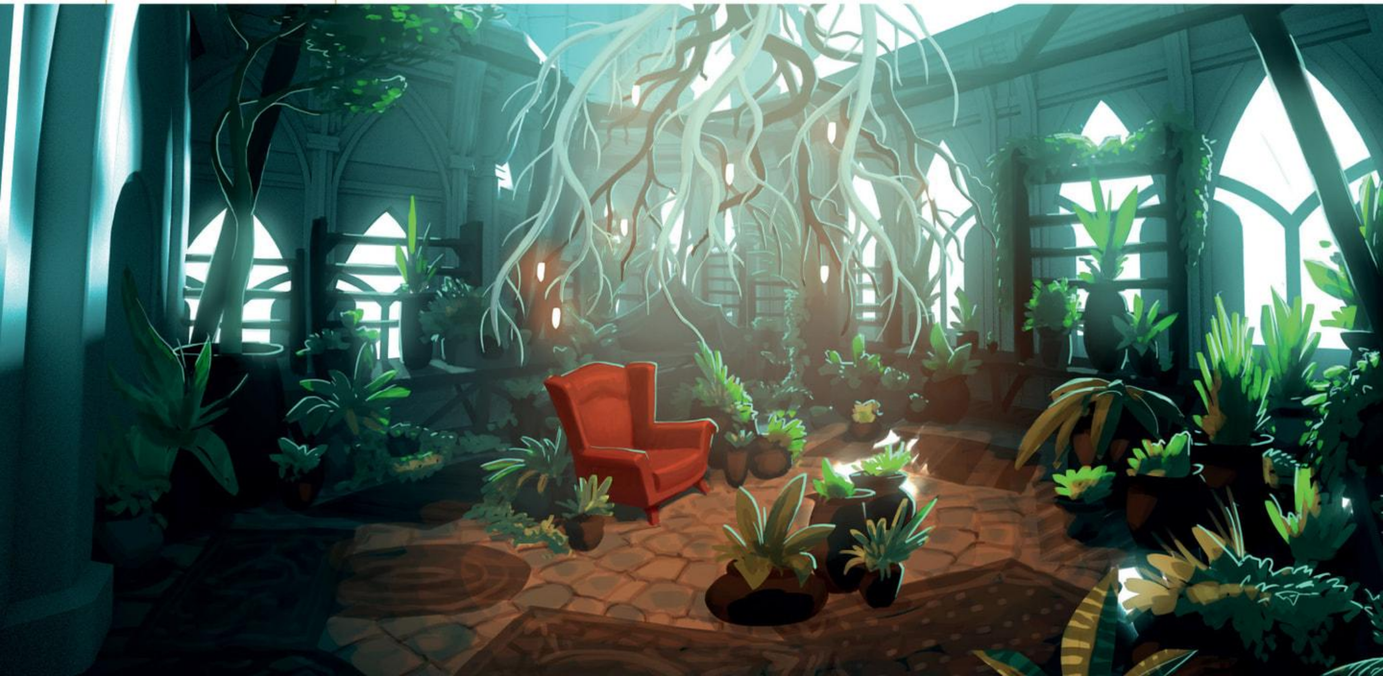




A corrupted red lyrium version.

Harding has a green thumb. Over the course of the game she transforms a dead space into a lush garden (a feat even more impressive in the Fade).

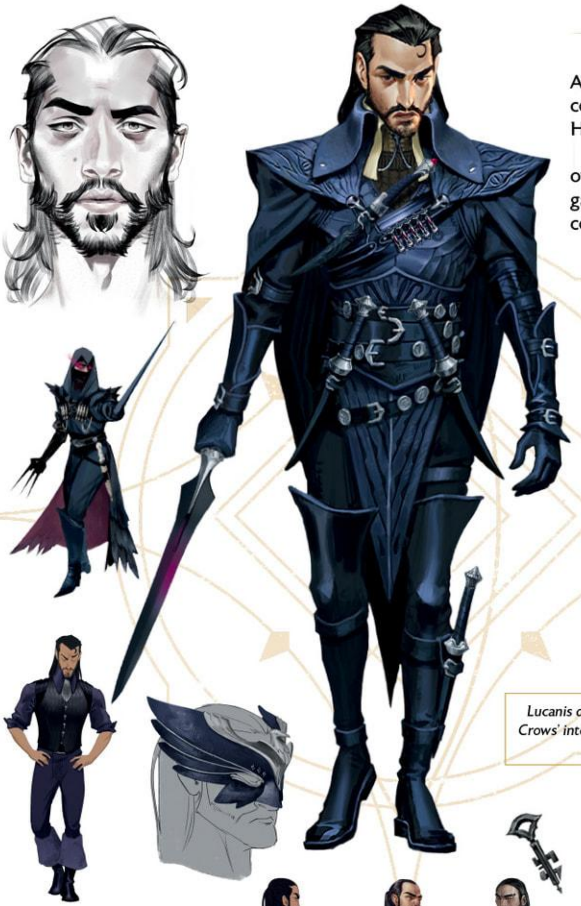




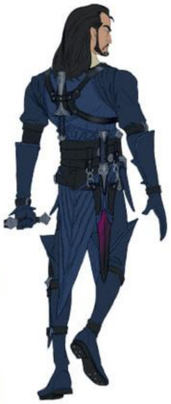
LUCANIS

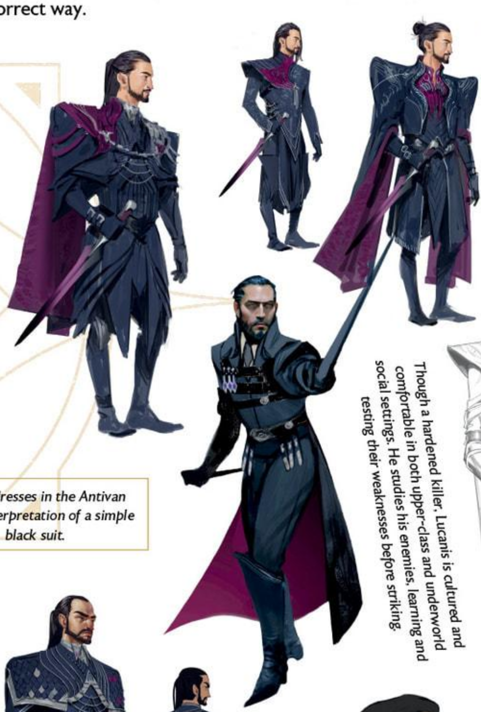
A trained assassin possessed by a demon of spite, Lucanis is constantly battling to control the darkness within himself. He is a black-hat badass who can kill anything.

As a member of the Antivan Crows, Lucanis feels a sense of loyalty to his house that goes beyond duty or monetary gain. Family is as ingrained in him as holding a dagger the correct way.

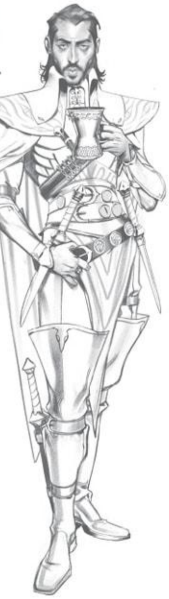


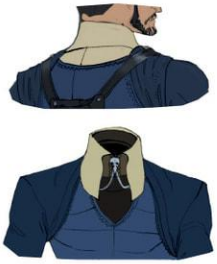
Lucanis dresses in the Antivan Crows' interpretation of a simple black suit.

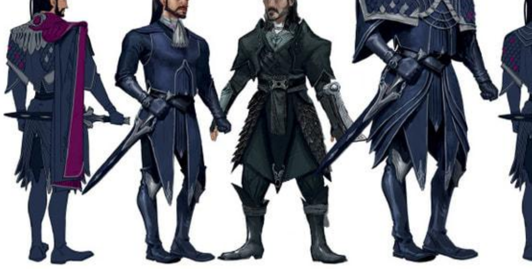


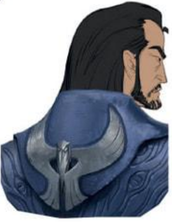


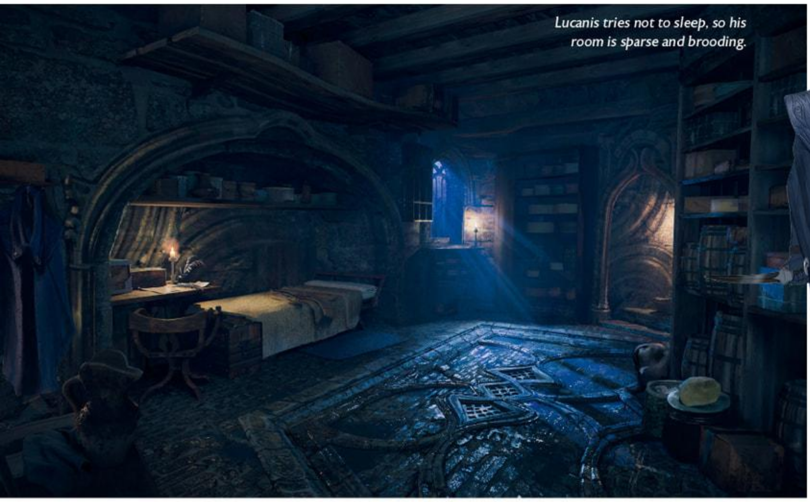
Though a hardened killer, Lucanis is cultured and comfortable in both upper-class and underworld social settings. He studies his enemies, learning and testing their weaknesses before striking.



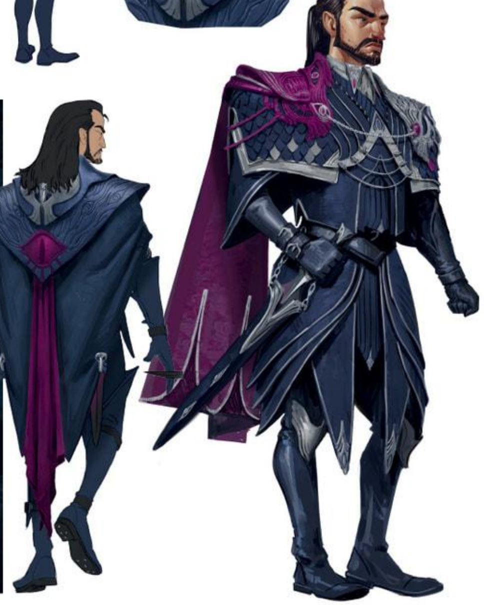


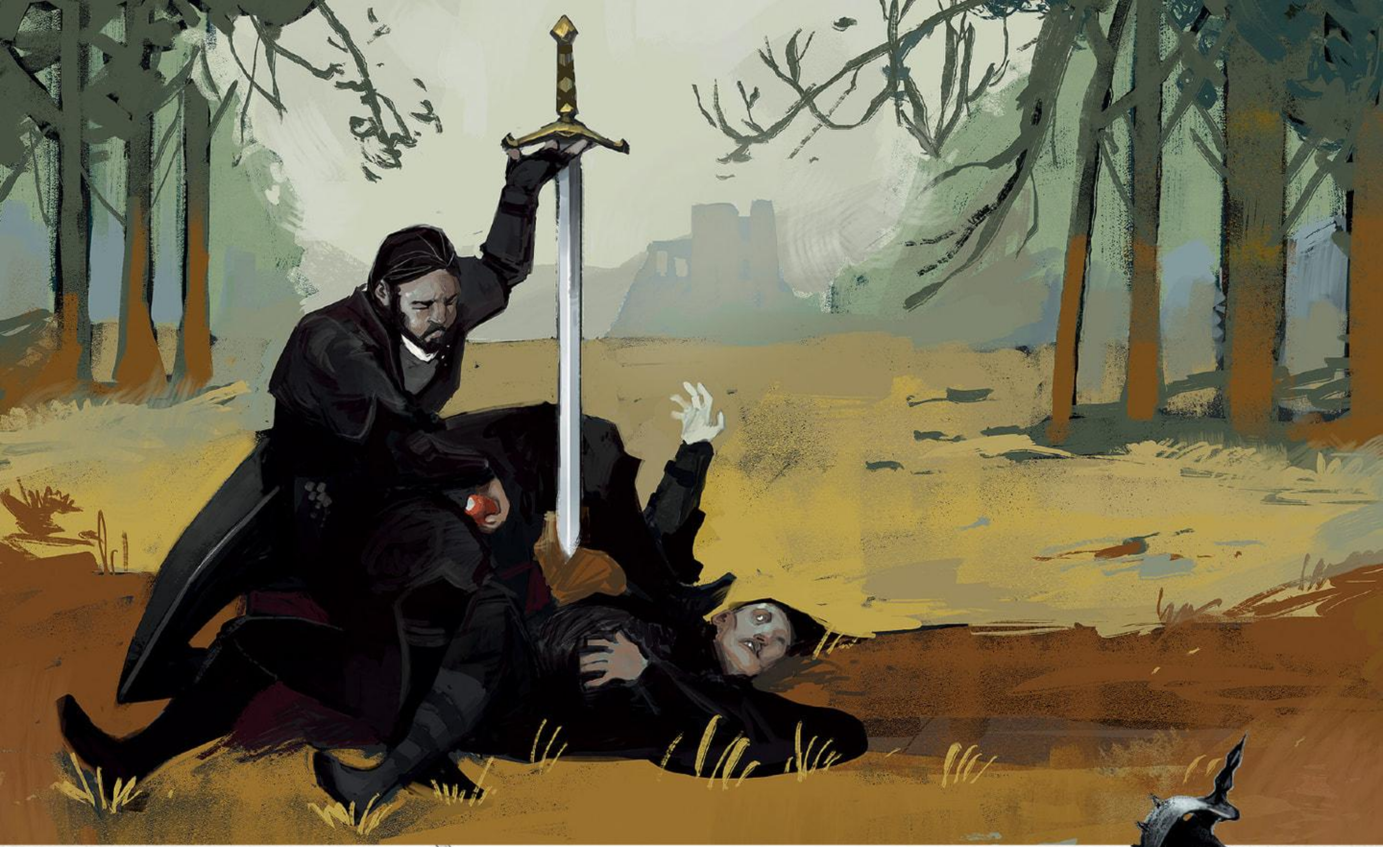


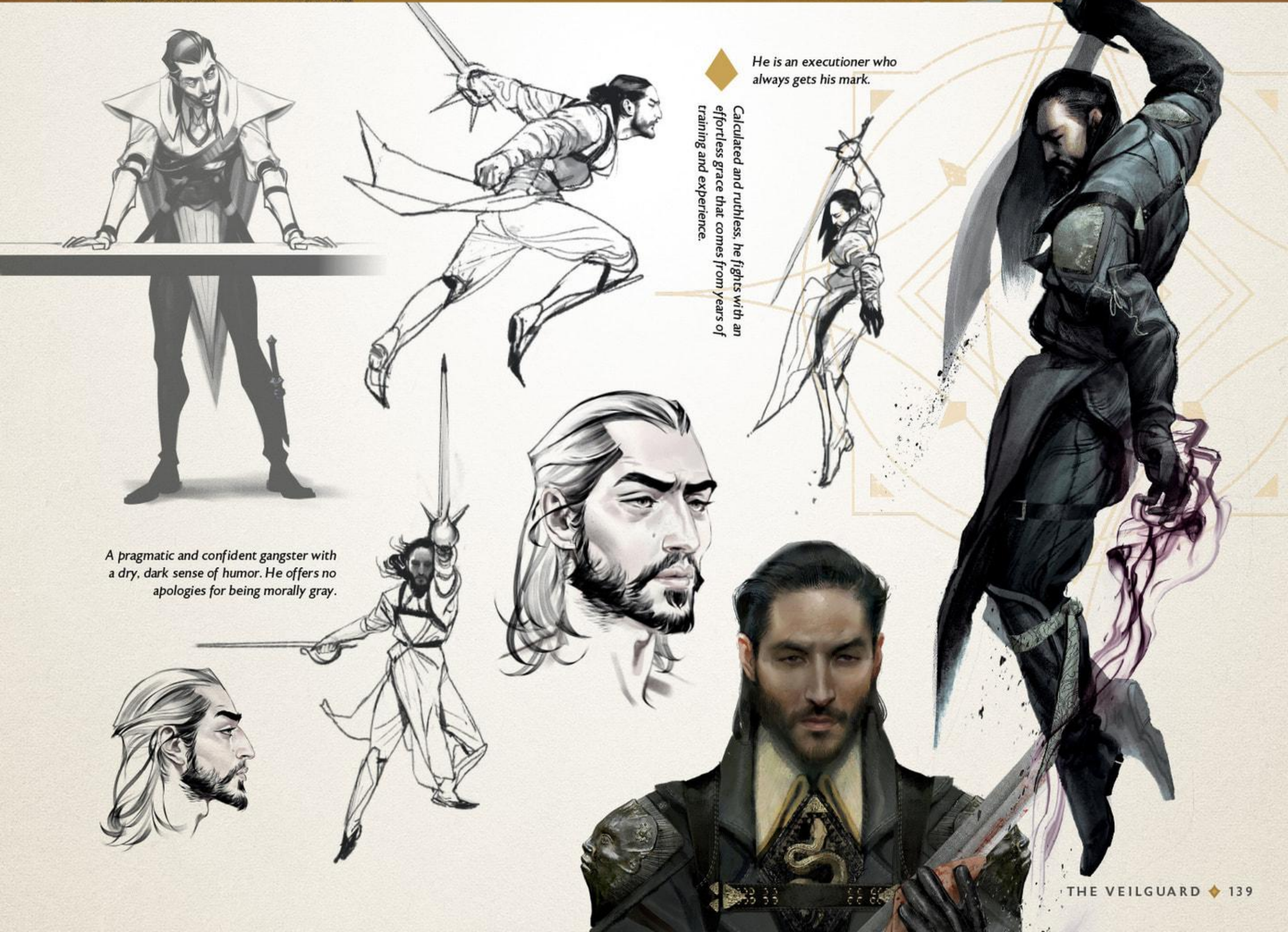




Lucanis tries not to sleep, so his room is sparse and brooding.







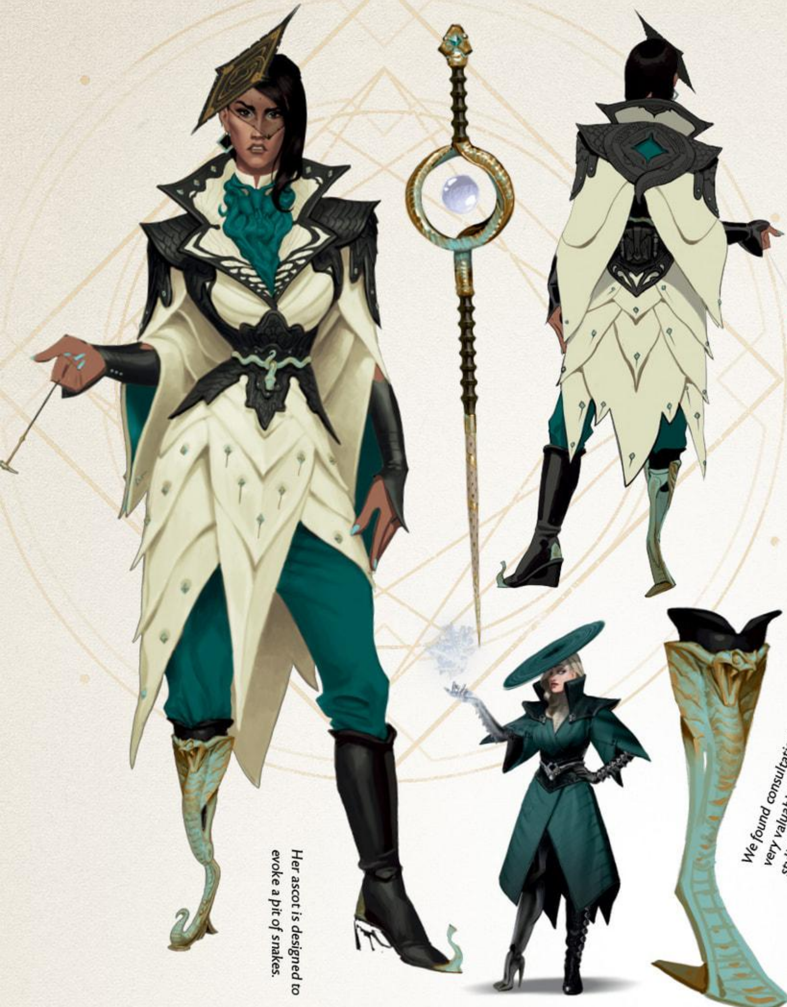
He is an executioner who always gets his mark.

Calculated and ruthless, he fights with an effortless grace that comes from years of training and experience.

A pragmatic and confident gangster with a dry, dark sense of humor. He offers no apologies for being morally gray.

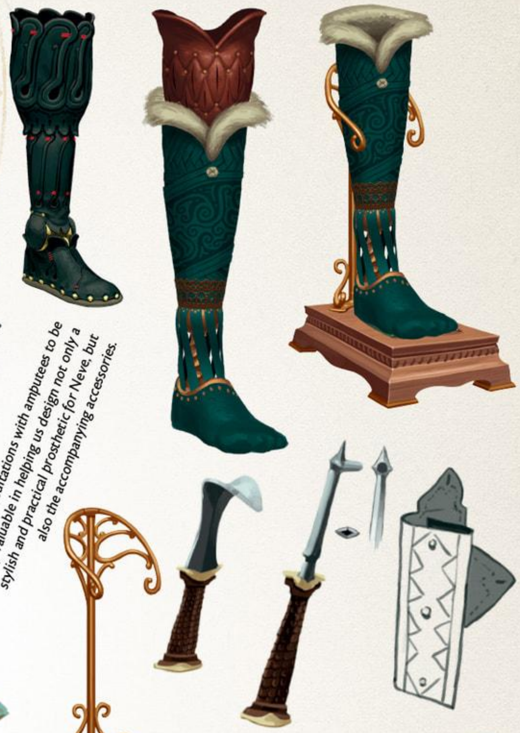
NEVE

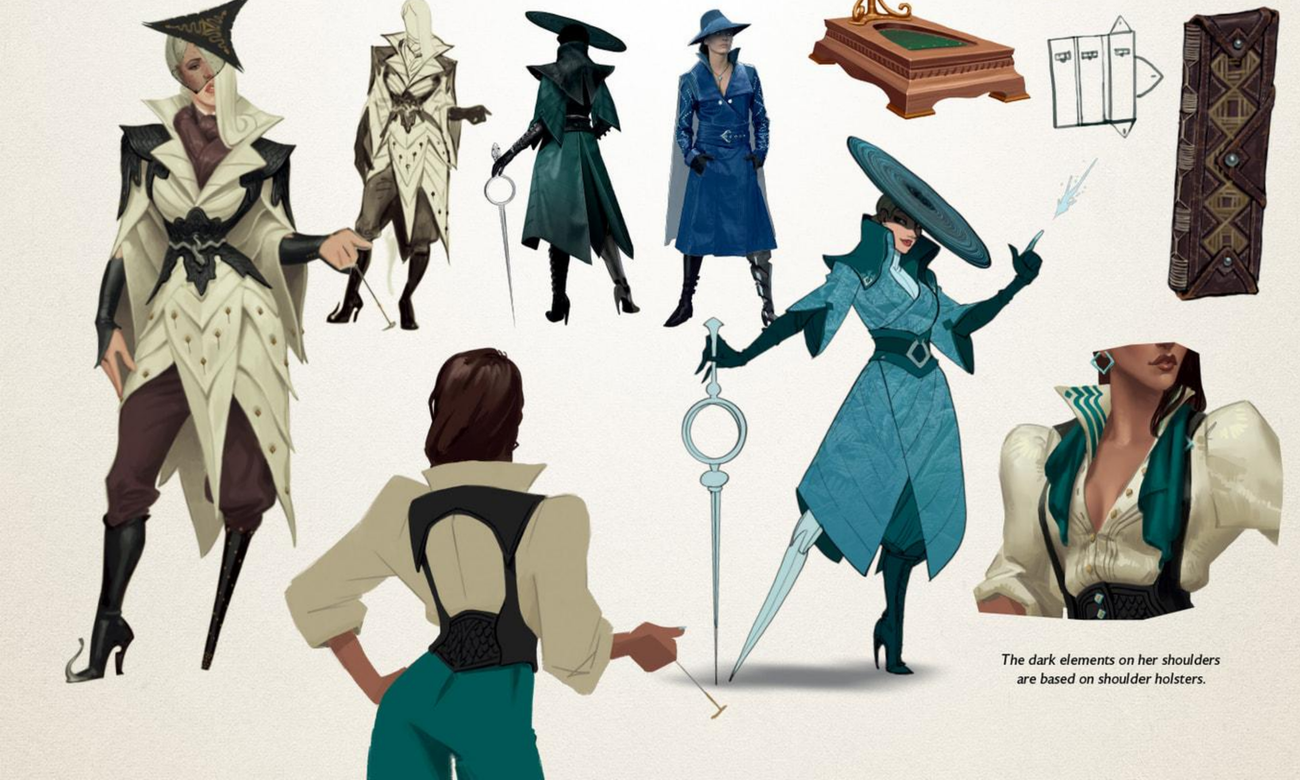
Magical noir detective in the big city. She cares more about everyday people with "right-now problems" than the big picture. Word spread through Minrathous that she'd help people both on and off the record, so she works whatever cases come her way that are worth taking. Her motto: she takes a job, she finishes it, she walks away . . . If only things were ever that simple. Her fighting style is low, broad, staccato, and effortless.



Her ascot is designed to evoke a pit of snakes.

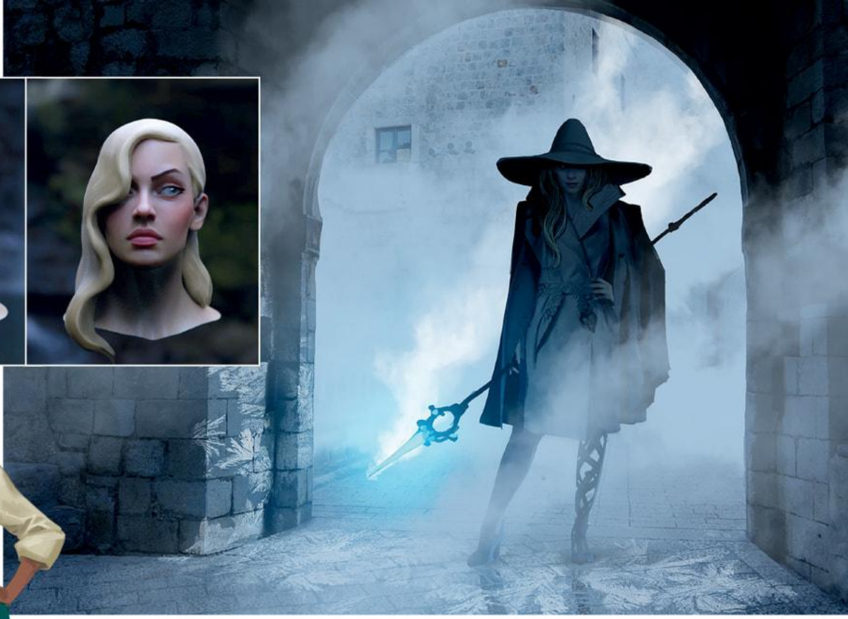
We found consultations with amputees to be very valuable in helping us design not only a stylish and practical prosthetic for Neve, but also the accompanying accessories.

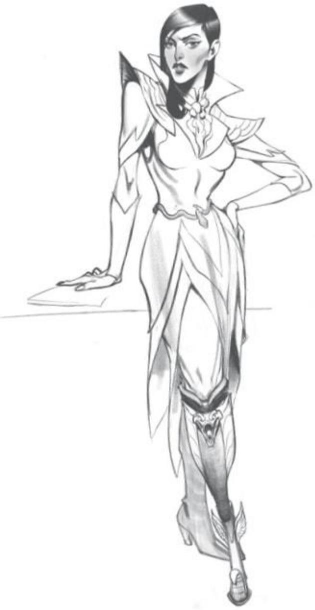


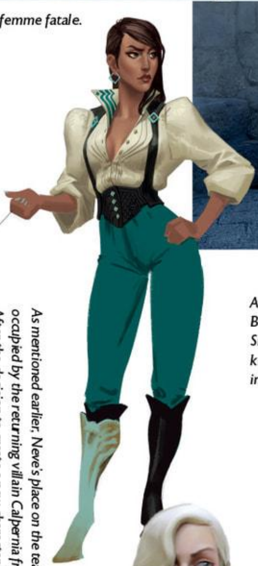


The dark elements on her shoulders are based on shoulder holsters.

Neve's outfit is a mix of detective and femme fatale.

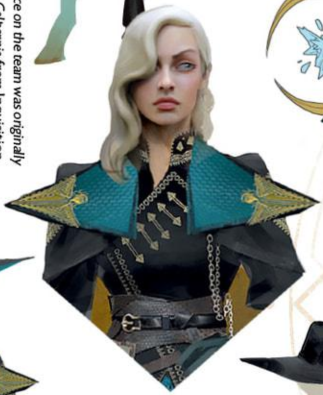


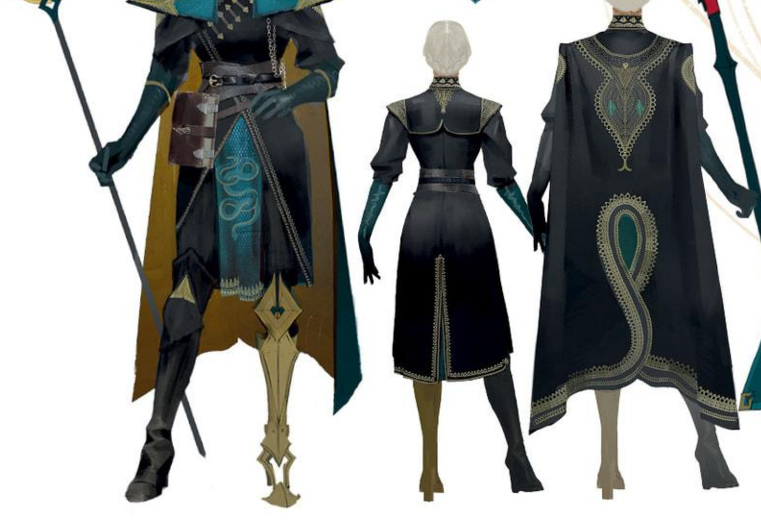


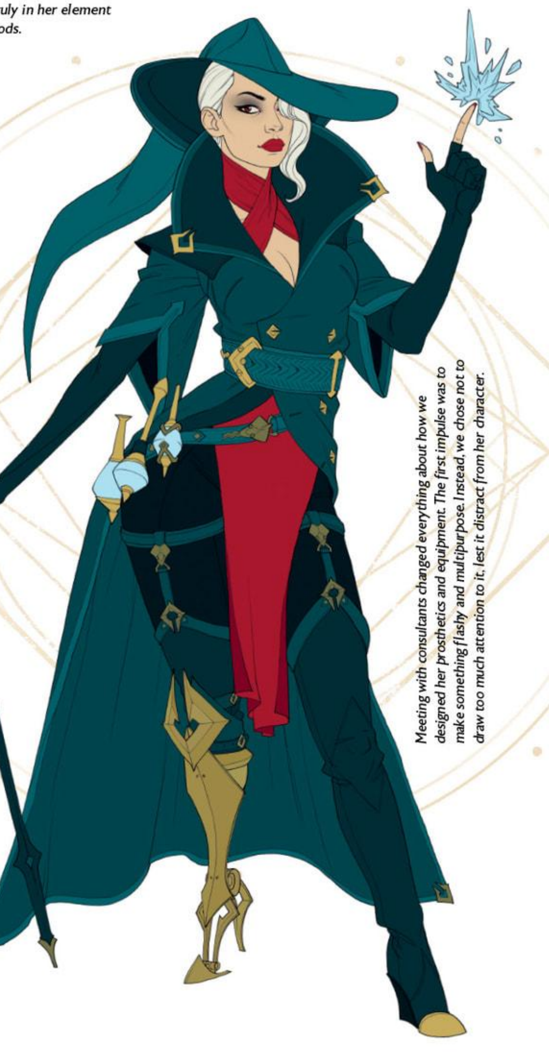


As mentioned earlier, Neve's place on the team was originally occupied by the returning villain Calpernia from Inquisition. After the decision to create a new character, the first versions of Neve's design were "Calpernia as a detective."

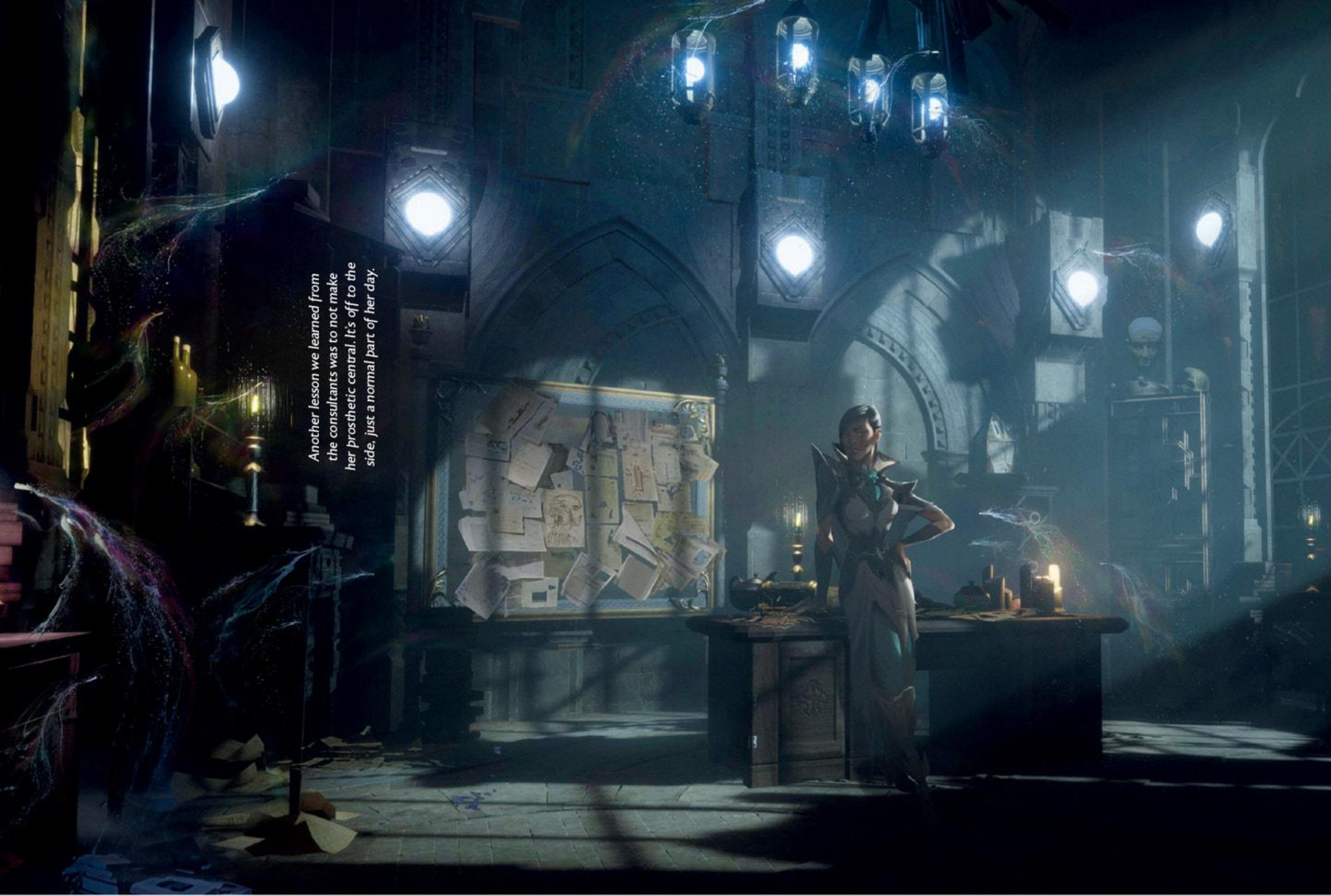
A cynic with a heart of gold, Neve is clever, driven, and guarded. She has a dry but playful sense of humor. Beneath her nonchalant attitude is someone who cares about what they do and wishes things were better. She can act comfortable in upper-class situations, but she's known to be an outsider, and she's truly in her element in Minrathous's less-rich neighborhoods.





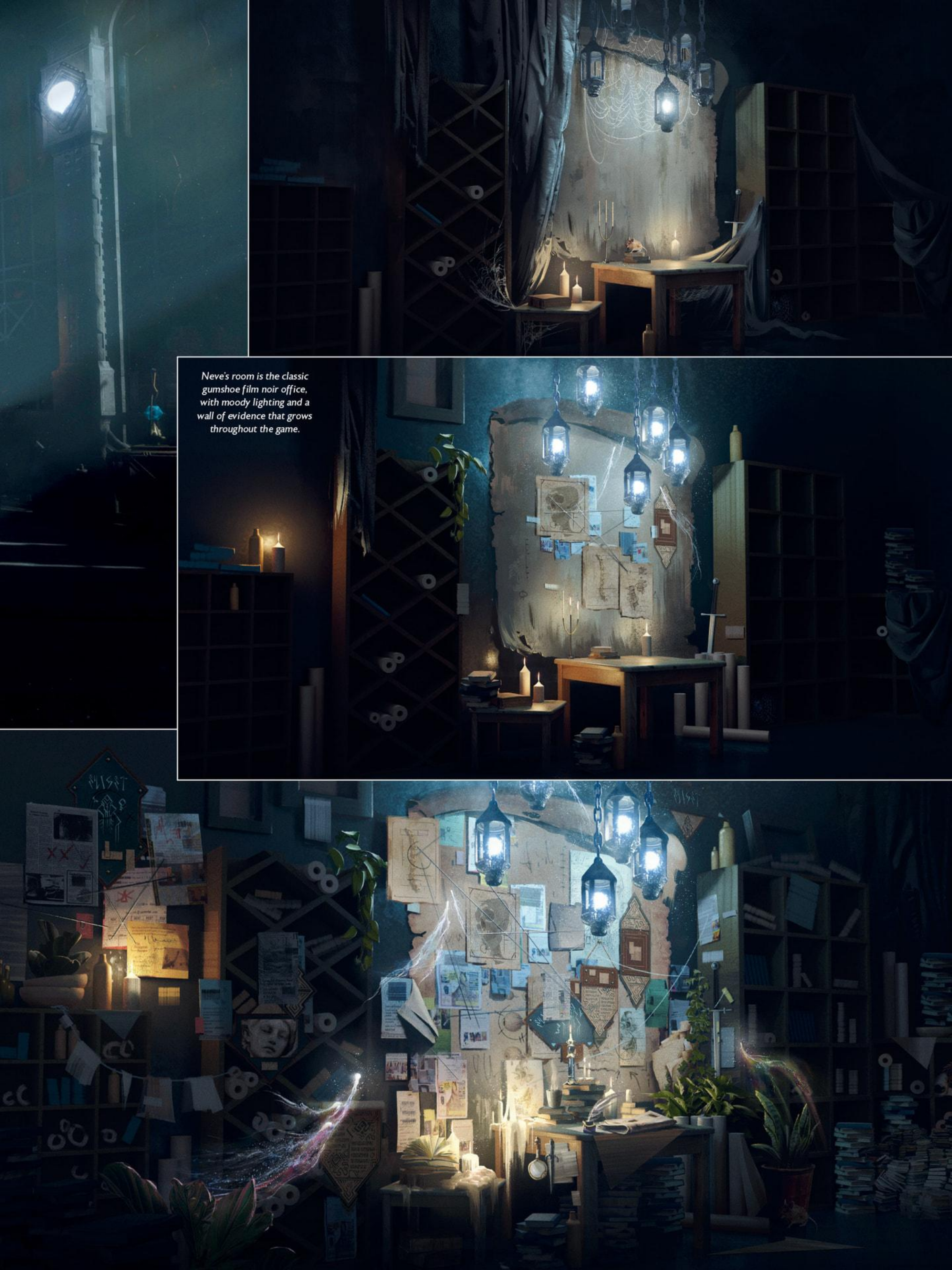


Meeting with consultants changed everything about how we designed her prosthetics and equipment. The first impulse was to make something flashy and multipurpose. Instead, we chose not to draw too much attention to it, lest it distract from her character.



Another lesson we learned from the consultants was to not make her prosthetic central. It's off to the side, just a normal part of her day.

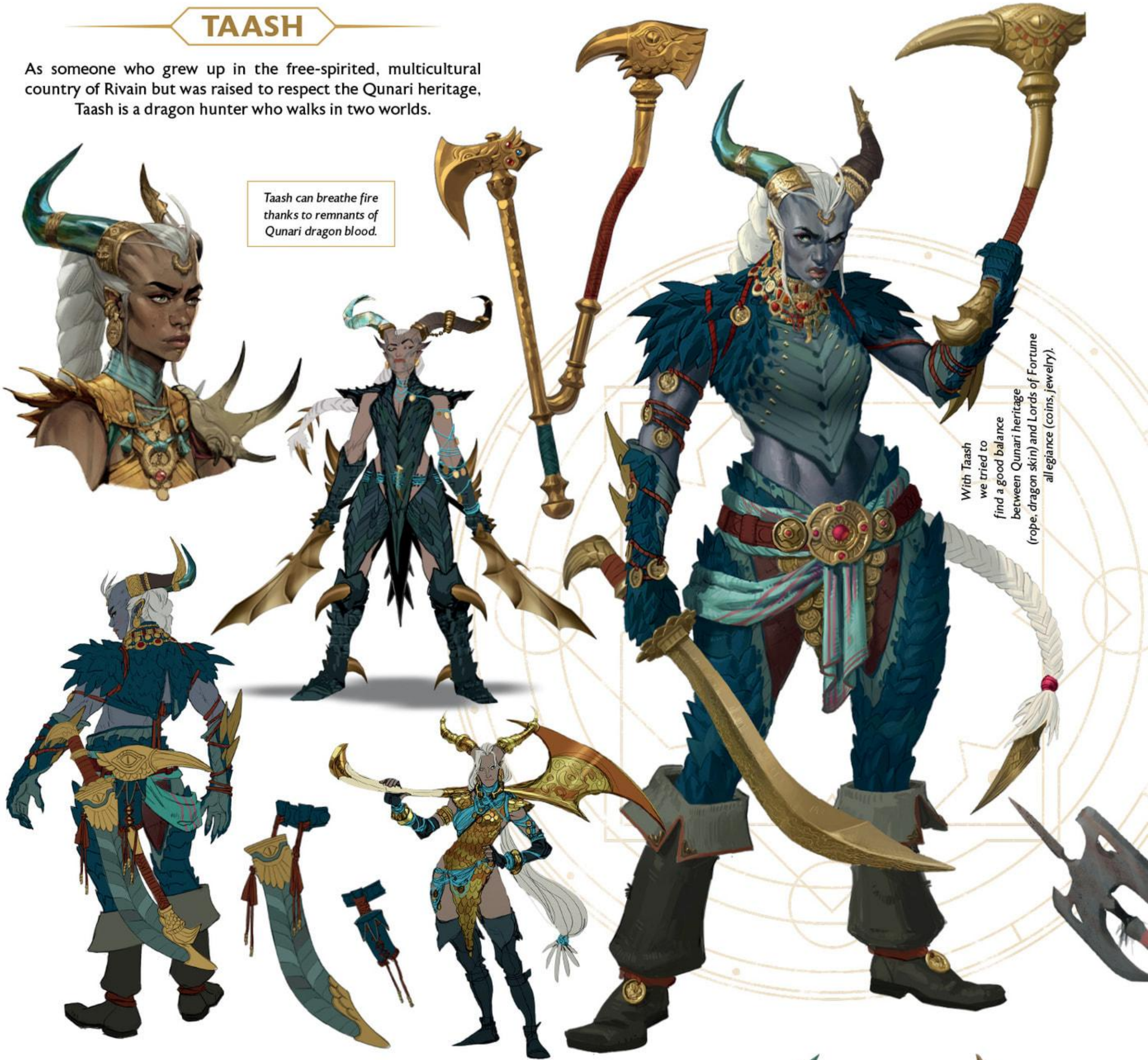
Neve's desk. Humble by Tevinter standards and marked with serpent imagery.



Neve's room is the classic gumshoe film noir office, with moody lighting and a wall of evidence that grows throughout the game.

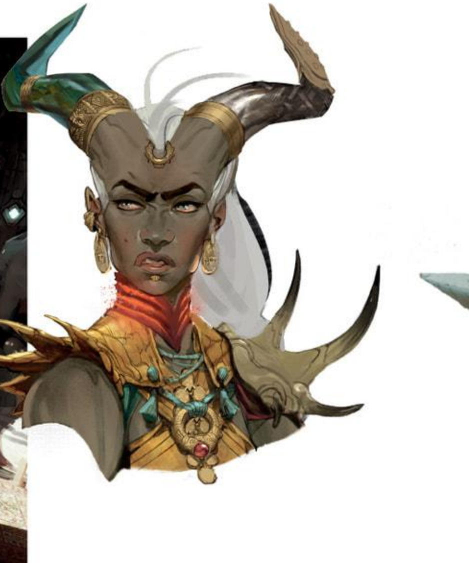
TAASH

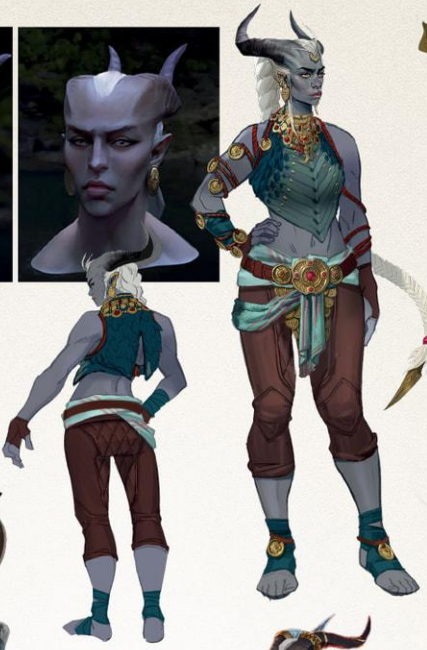
As someone who grew up in the free-spirited, multicultural country of Rivain but was raised to respect the Qunari heritage, Taash is a dragon hunter who walks in two worlds.

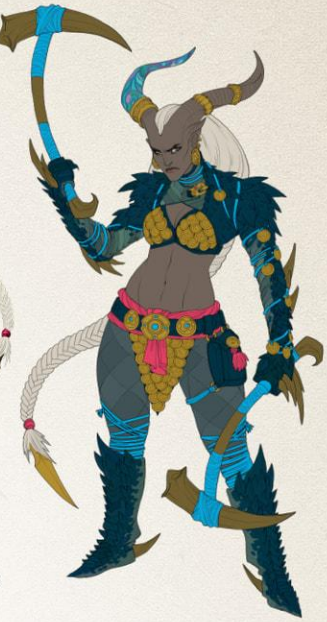


Taash can breathe fire thanks to remnants of Qunari dragon blood.

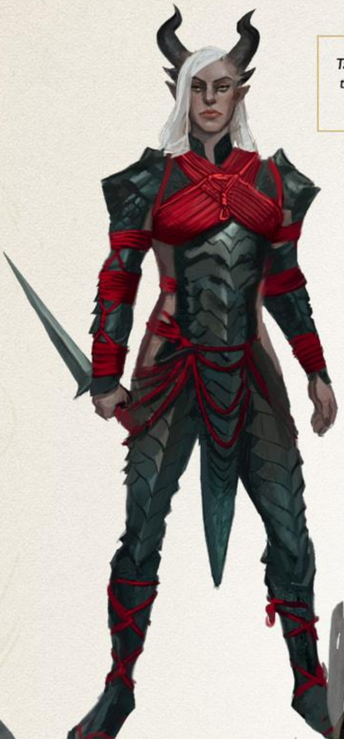
With Taash we tried to find a good balance between Qunari heritage (rope, dragon skin) and Lords of Fortune allegiance (coins, jewelry).

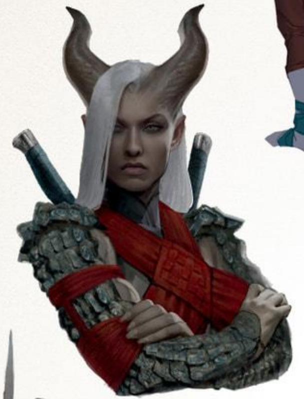






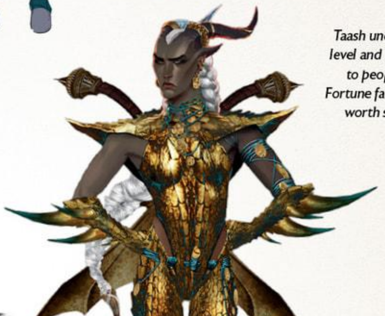
Taash's idle pose was drawn to give the impression of a fighter after a match.

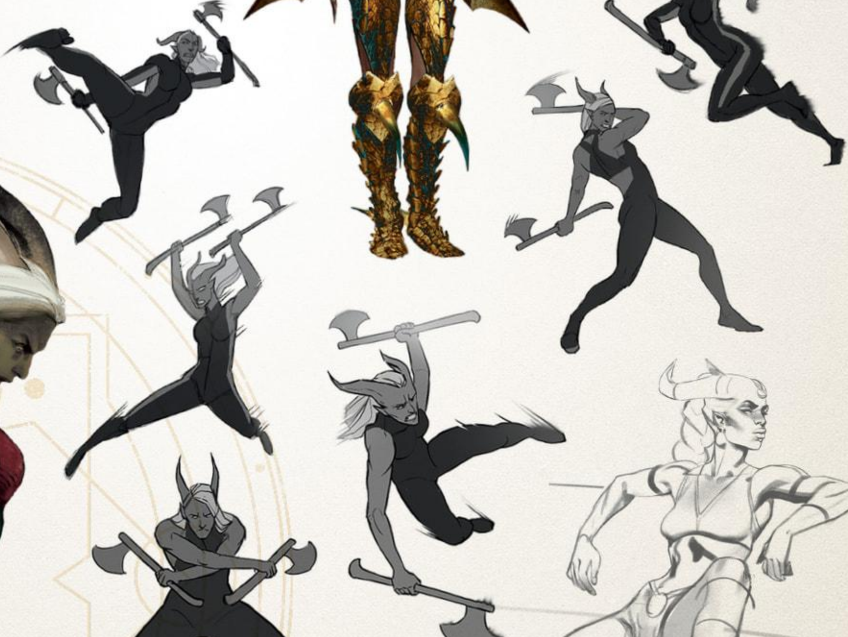


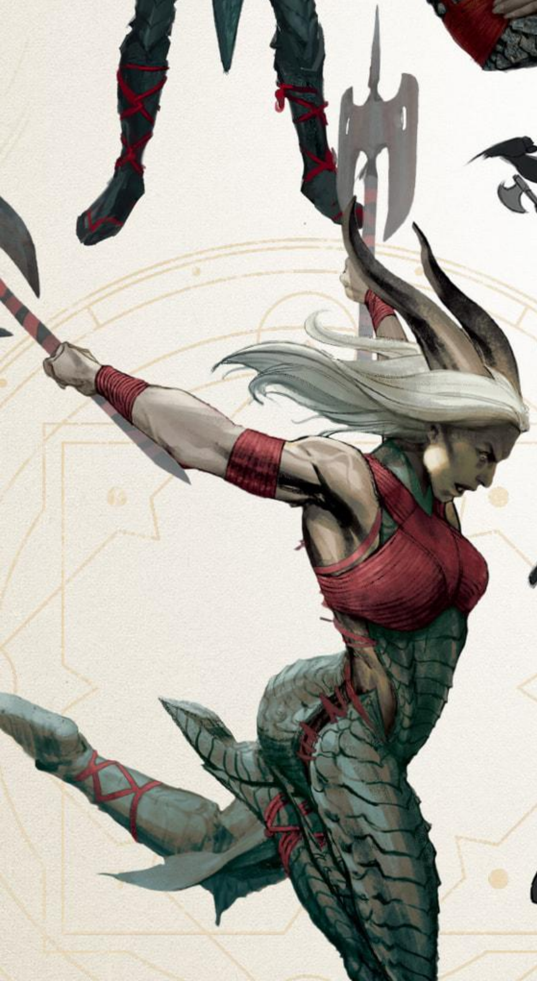


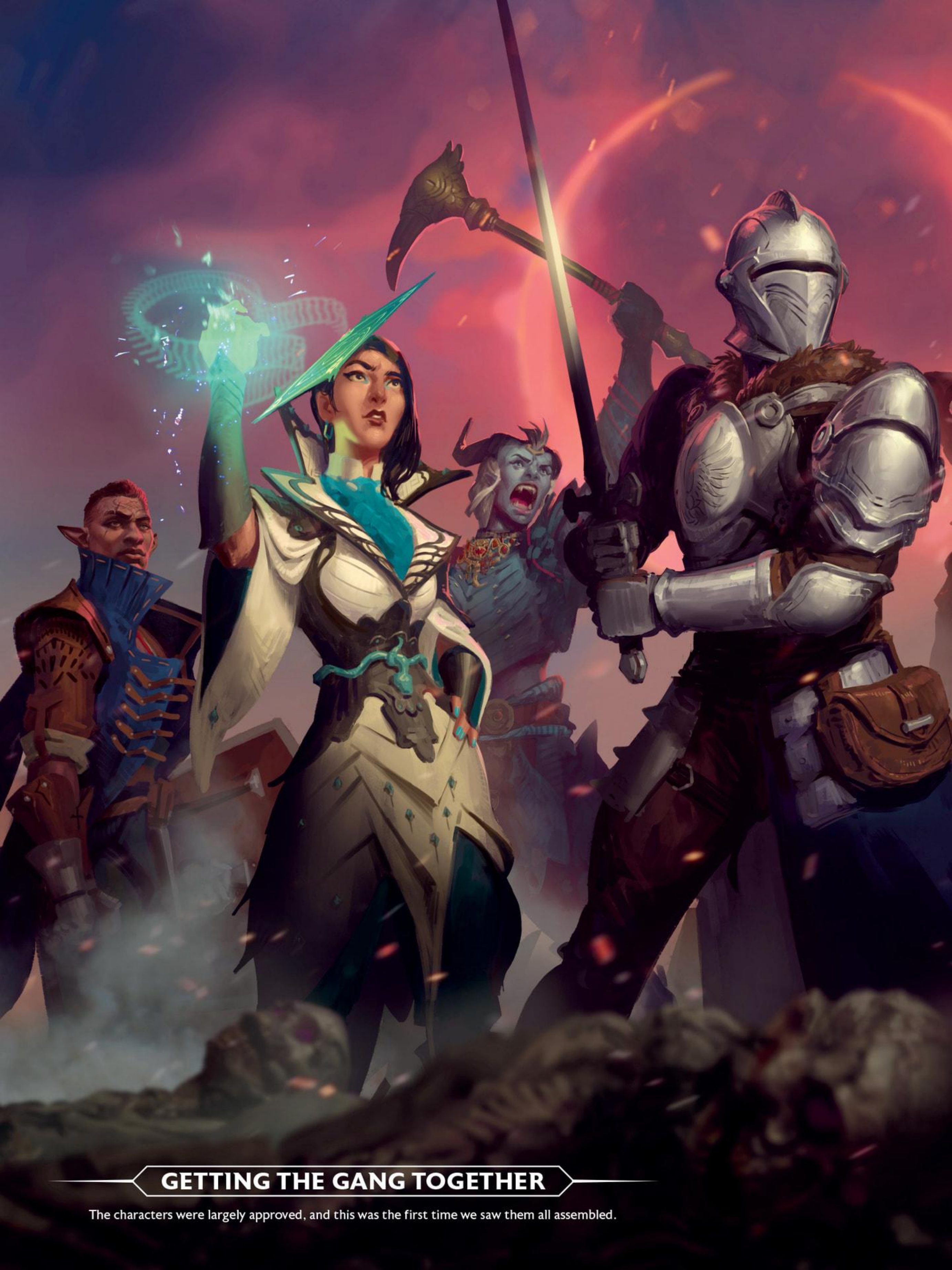
Taash understands dragons on an instinctual level and hunts and kills any that are a danger to people. Taash is a part of the Lords of Fortune faction, adventurers who seek dragons worth slaying and treasure worth taking.

A pair of axes and light armor allow for quick movement—and even getting onto the backs of large enemies.



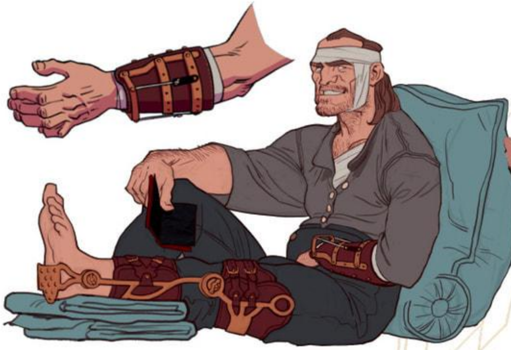


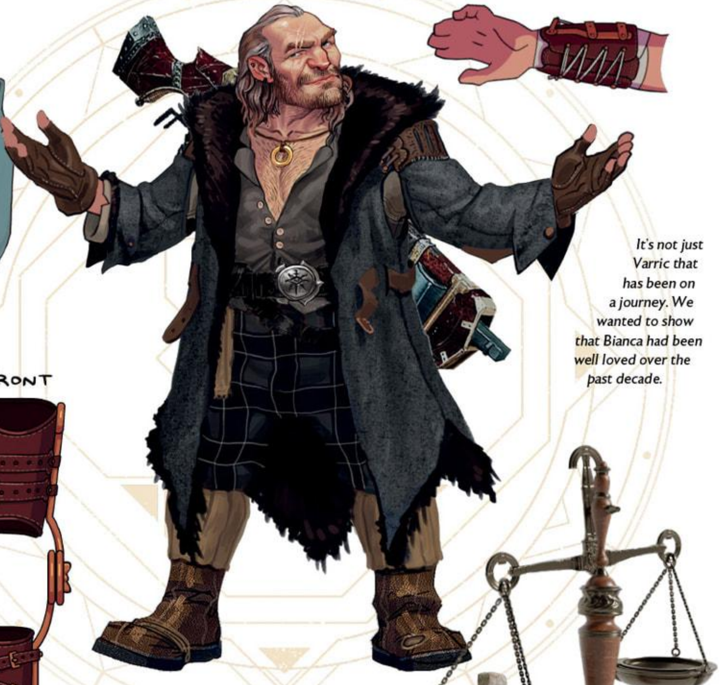




GETTING THE GANG TOGETHER

The characters were largely approved, and this was the first time we saw them all assembled.

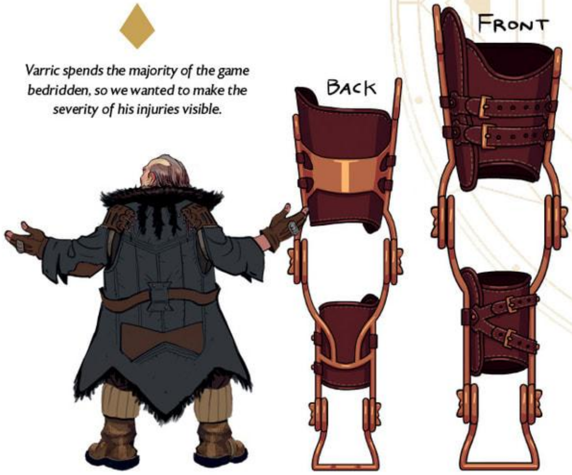




It's not just Varric that has been on a journey. We wanted to show that Bianca had been well loved over the past decade.

◆

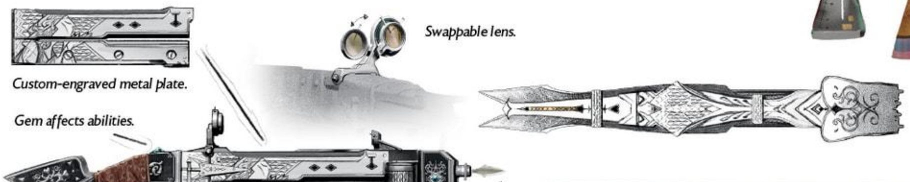
Varric spends the majority of the game bedridden, so we wanted to make the severity of his injuries visible.



VARRIC

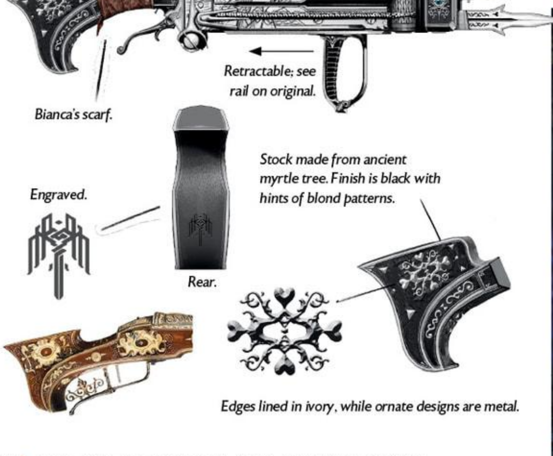
It's a joy to revisit characters. It's a great opportunity to visually tell the story of all the years we've missed. Varric is older, a little scruffier, maybe preferring comfort to style as his adventuring days near their end. He's also let go of some of his old priorities, not needing to be flashy, not as concerned about keeping his beard short.

We also decided to go with a darker and more washed-out color palette, for reasons that people who have played through the game will understand.



Custom-engraved metal plate.

Swappable lens.



Gem affects abilities.

Retractable; see rail on original.

Bianca's scarf.

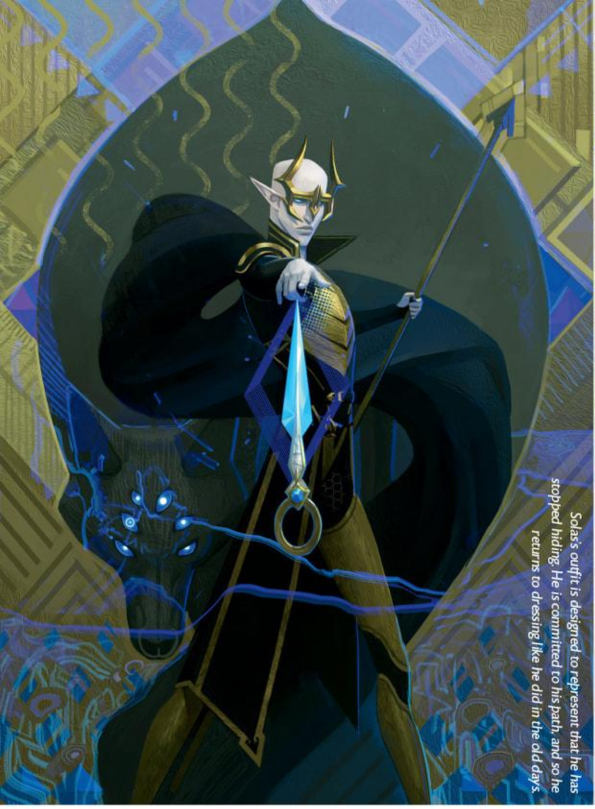
Stock made from ancient myrtle tree. Finish is black with hints of blond patterns.

Engraved.

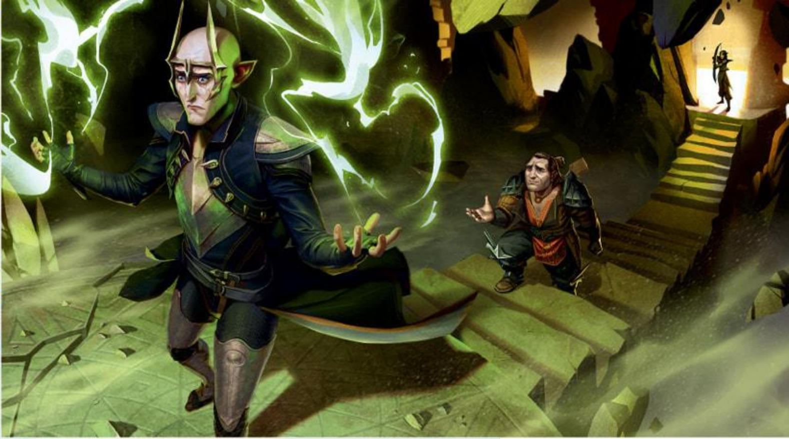
Rear.

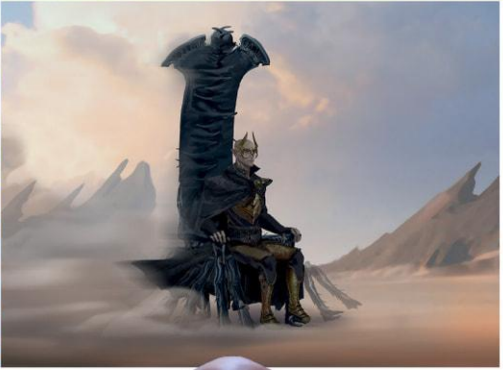
Edges lined in ivory, while ornate designs are metal.

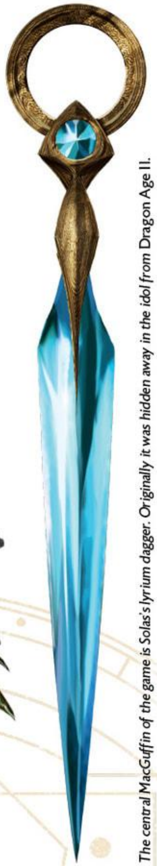
An ancient elven room converted into an infirmary, where Rook recovers.



Solas's outfit is designed to represent that he has stopped hiding. He is committed to his path, and so he returns to dressing like he did in the old days.





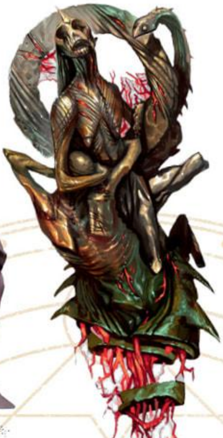


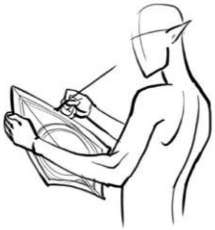
The central MacGuffin of the game is Solas's lyrium dagger. Originally it was hidden away in the idol from Dragon Age II.

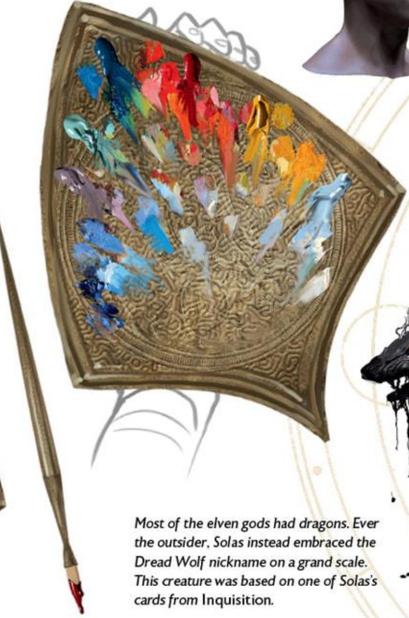
SOLAS

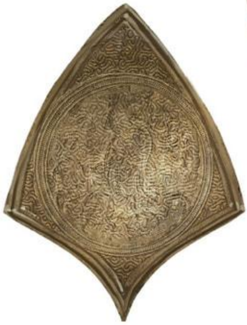
While known as Solas in present-day Thedas, he was once known as Fen'Harel, the Dread Wolf, the elven god of betrayal. In ancient times, he rebelled against the other elven gods, the Evanuris, and sealed them away from the living world, behind the Veil.

Solas's true identity remained hidden from the world through the events of *Dragon Age: Inquisition* and was revealed in the *Trespasser* DLC. During that time, he was an Inquisition follower masquerading as a simple hedge mage.

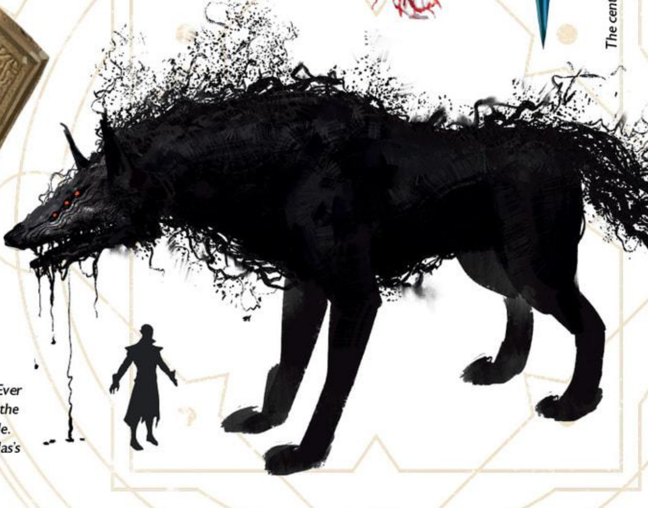








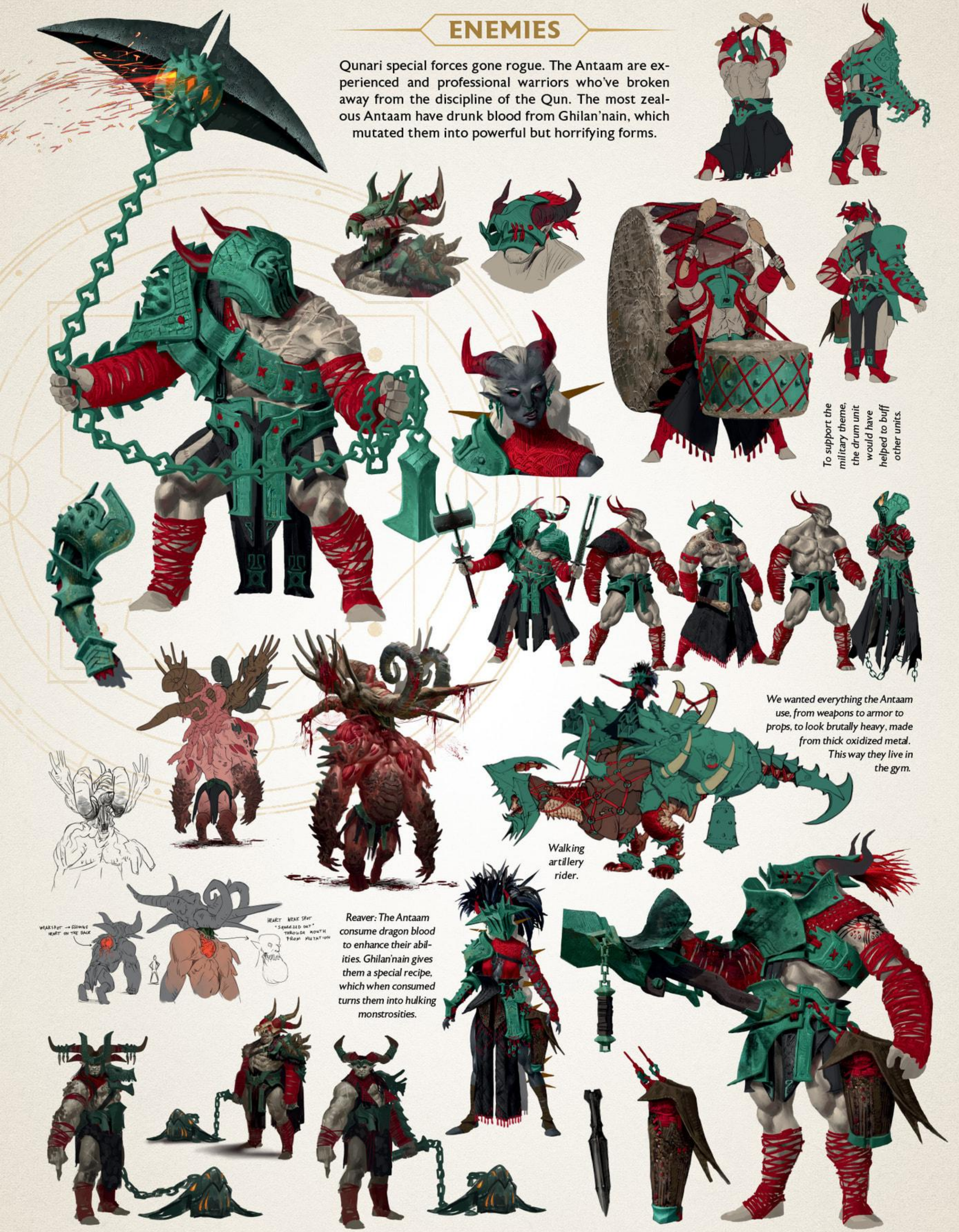
One of the palettes Solas used when painting one of his many historical and confessional murals.



Most of the elven gods had dragons. Ever the outsider, Solas instead embraced the Dread Wolf nickname on a grand scale. This creature was based on one of Solas's cards from Inquisition.

ENEMIES

Qunari special forces gone rogue. The Antaam are experienced and professional warriors who've broken away from the discipline of the Qun. The most zealous Antaam have drunk blood from Ghilan'nain, which mutated them into powerful but horrifying forms.

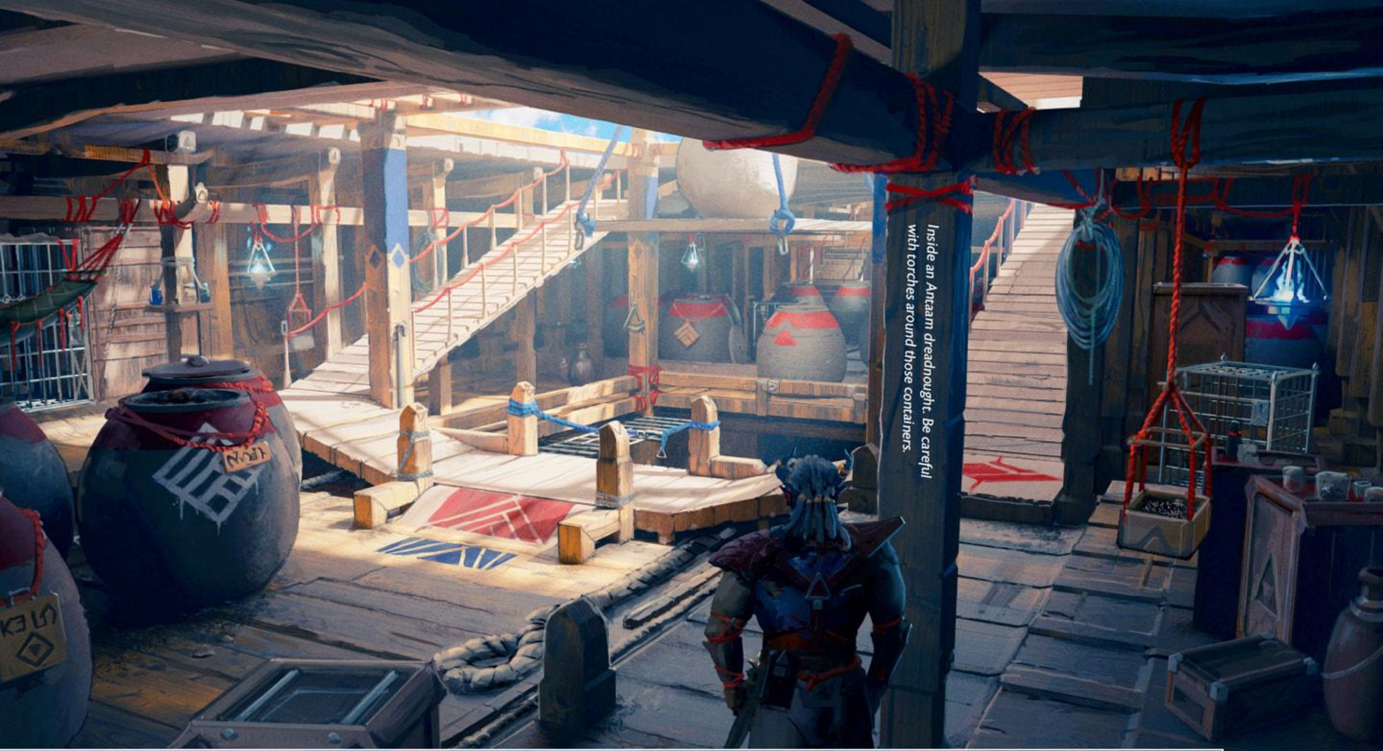

WEAKSPOT → GLOWING HEART ON THE BACK
HEART WEAK SPOT "SQUEEZED OUT" THROUGH MOUTH FROM MUTATION

To support the military theme, the drum unit would have helped to buff other units.

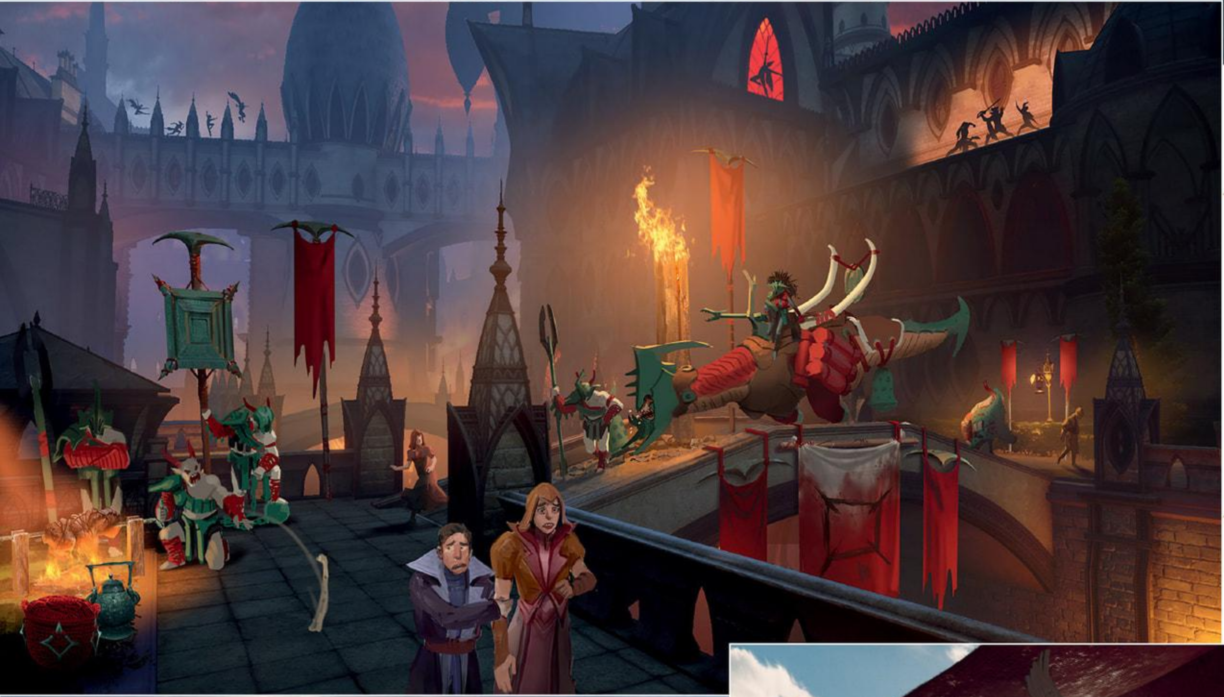
We wanted everything the Antaam use, from weapons to armor to props, to look brutally heavy, made from thick oxidized metal. This way they live in the gym.

Walking artillery rider.

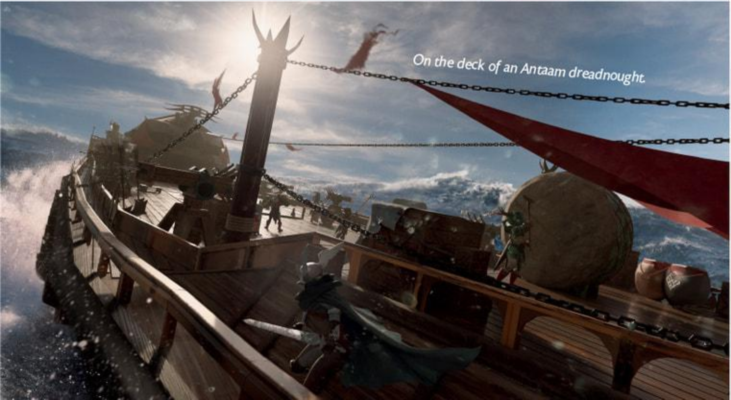
Reaver: The Antaam consume dragon blood to enhance their abilities. Ghilan'nain gives them a special recipe, which when consumed turns them into hulking monstrosities.



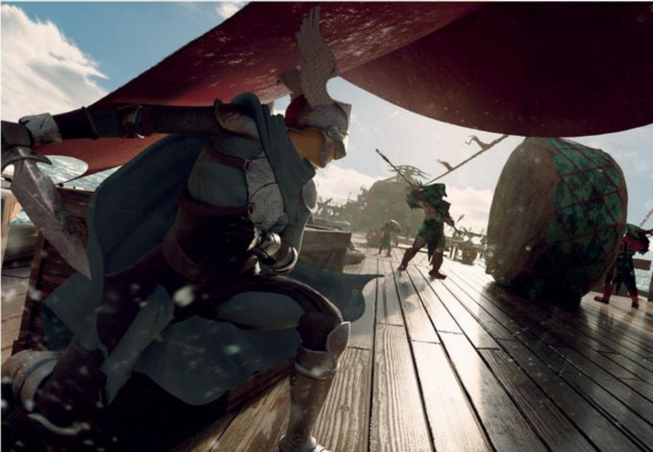
Inside an Antaam dreadnought. Be careful with torches around those containers.

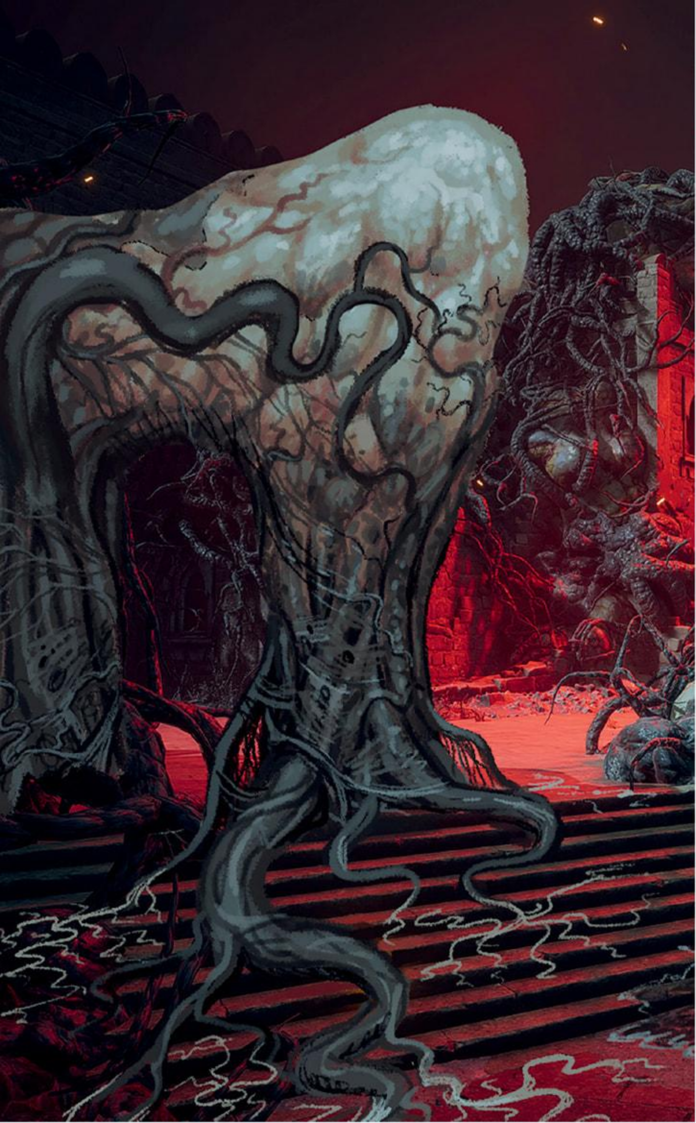


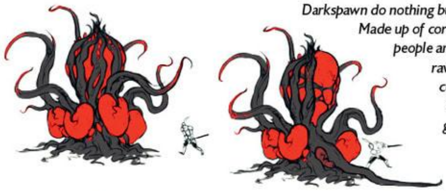
Antaam-occupied Antiva.



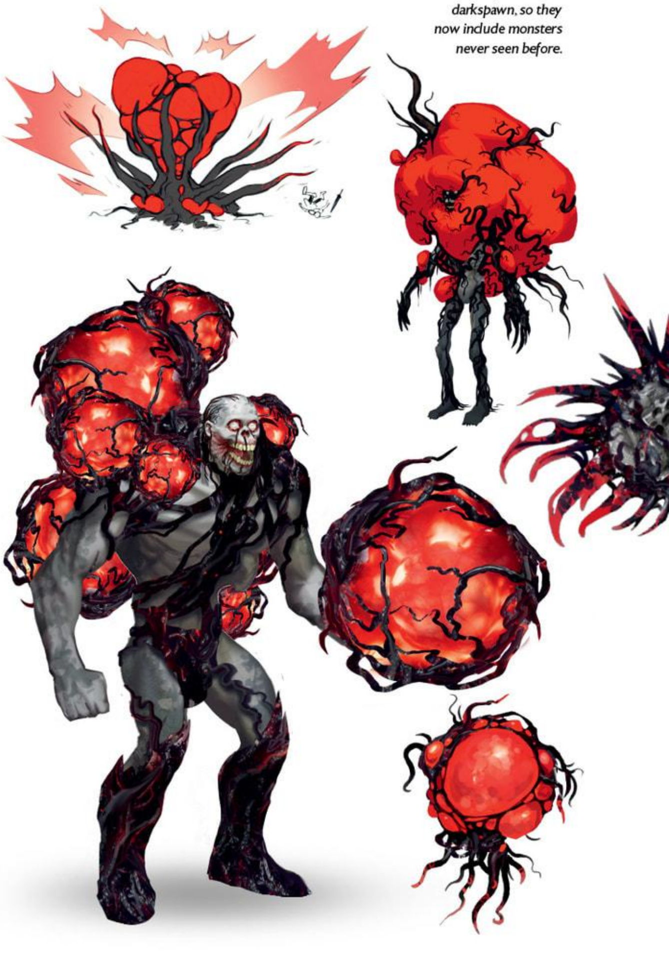
On the deck of an Antaam dreadnought.

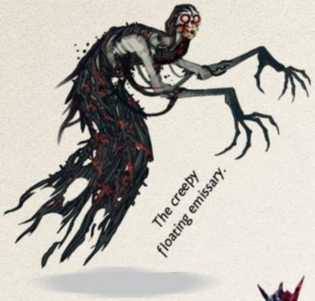




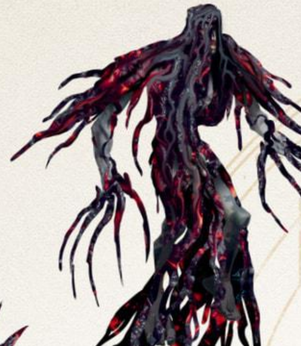


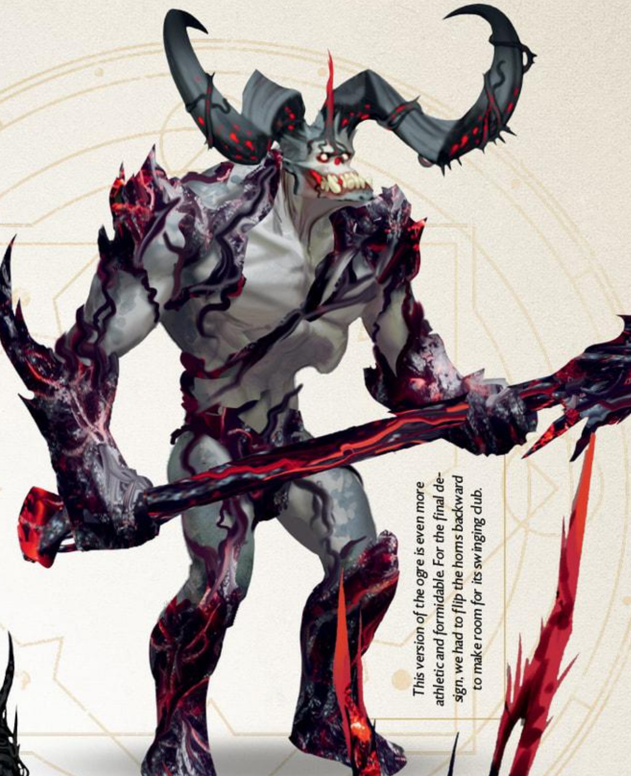
Darkspawn do nothing but kill and destroy. Made up of corrupted versions of people and creatures, these ravagers have animal cunning but are not sentient or intelligent; they work on instinct instead. Ghilan'nain has "improved" the darkspawn, so they now include monsters never seen before.



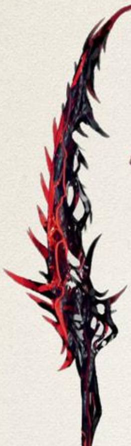


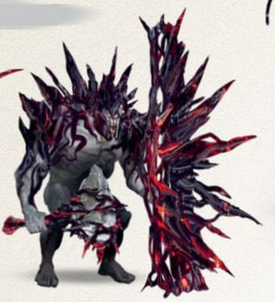
The creepy floating emissary.

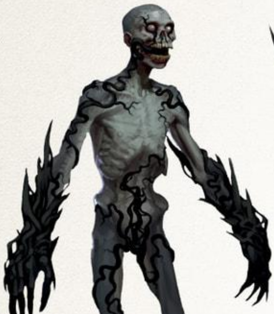


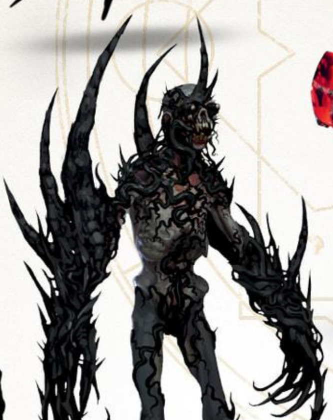


This version of the ogre is even more athletic and formidable. For the final design, we had to flip the horns backward to make room for its swinging club.

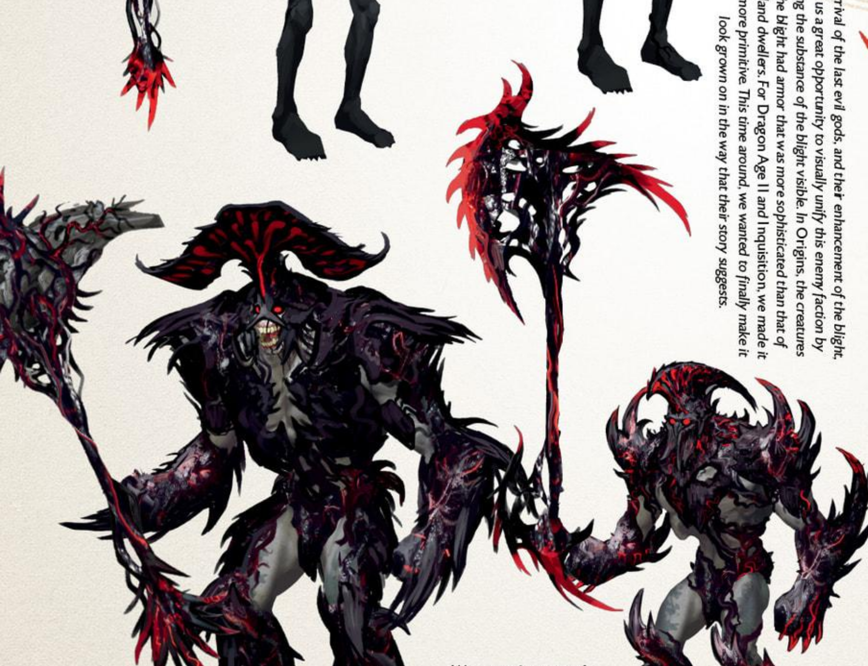




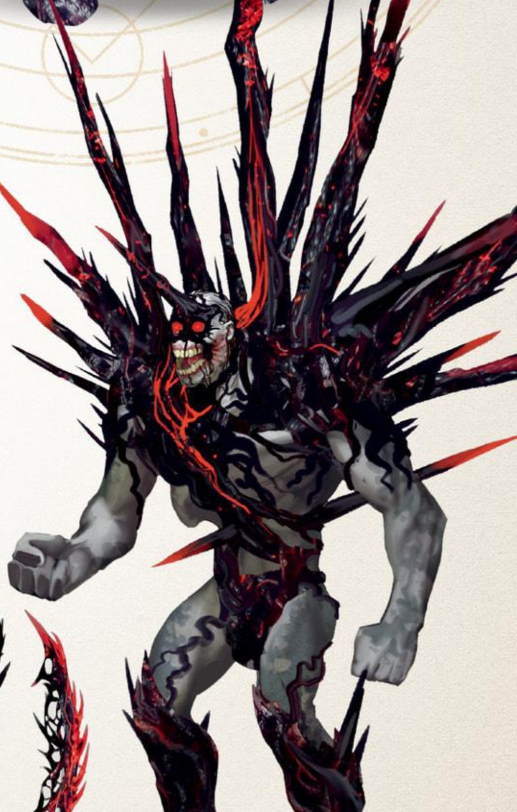


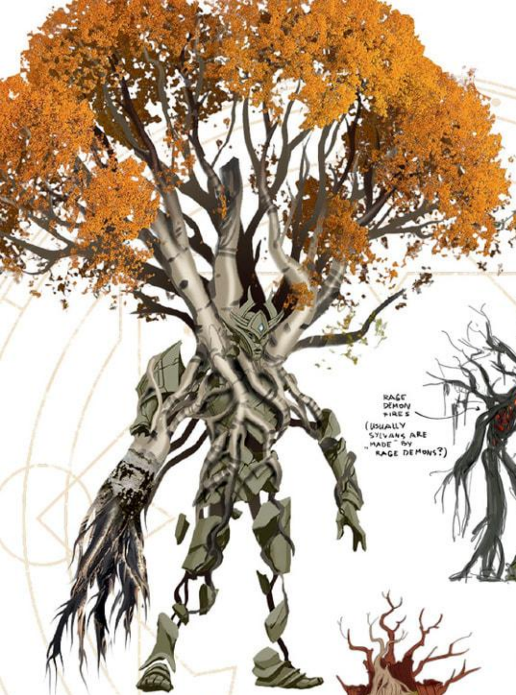


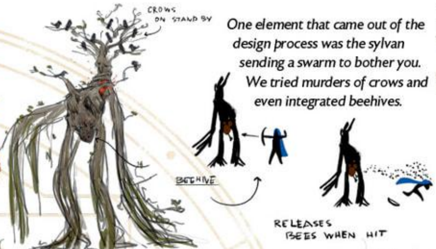
The arrival of the last evil gods, and their enhancement of the blight, gave us a great opportunity to visually unify this enemy faction by making the substance of the blight visible. In Origins, the creatures of the blight had armor that was more sophisticated than that of most land dwellers. For Dragon Age II and Inquisition, we made it look more primitive. This time around, we wanted to finally make it look grown on in the way that their story suggests.



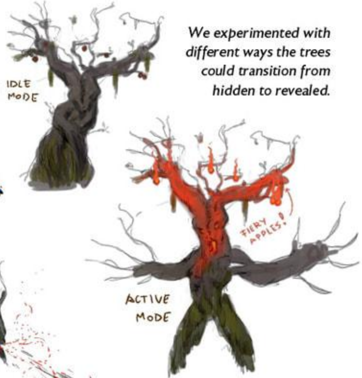
We created a range of hurlock enemies that grew into different combat roles.



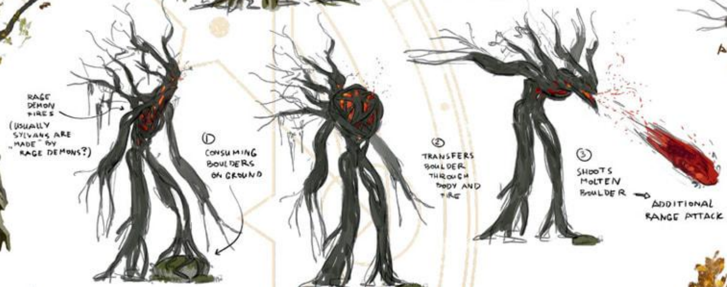



CROWS
ON STAND BY
BEEHIVE
RELEASES
BEES WHEN HIT

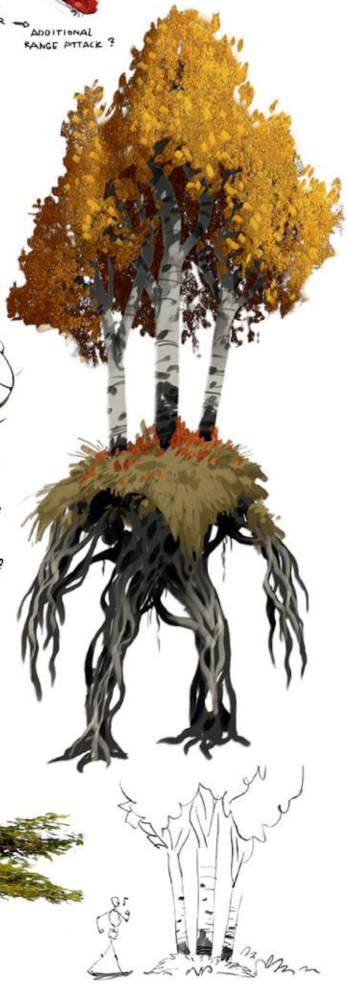
One element that came out of the design process was the sylvan sending a swarm to bother you. We tried murders of crows and even integrated beehives.

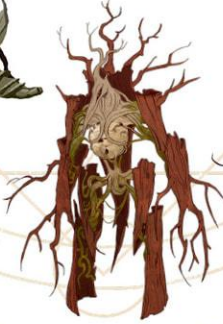

IDLE
MODE
FIERY
APPLES!
ACTIVE
MODE

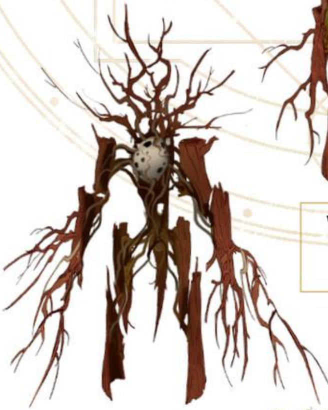
We experimented with different ways the trees could transition from hidden to revealed.


RAGE
DEMON
FIRES
(USUALLY
SYLVANS ARE
"MADE" BY
RAGE DEMONS?)
①
CONSUMING
BOULDERS
ON GROUND
②
TRANSFERS
BOULDER
THROUGH
BODY AND
FIRE
③
SHOOTS
MOLTEN
BOULDER
ADDITIONAL
RANGE ATTACK ?

Supernatural creatures twisted by magic or springing from older, unknown sources lost to time. They are physical beings (unlike spirits) with unnatural powers and grotesque forms. Many of them look like corrupted versions of natural things, such as plants or animals.

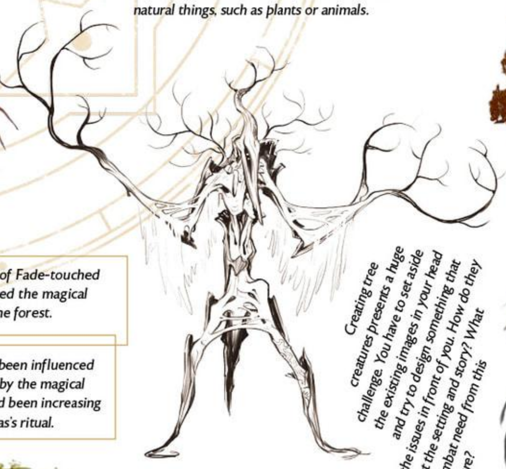




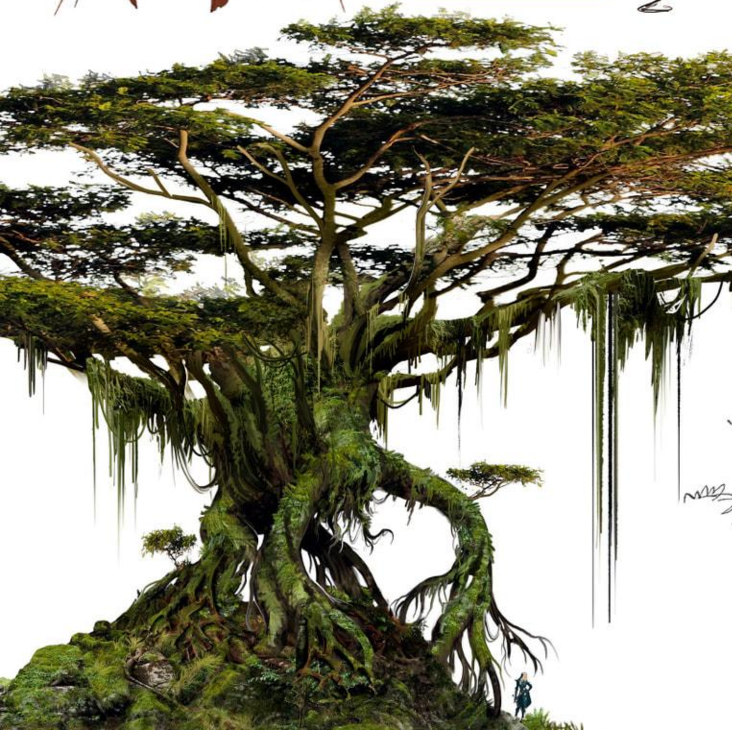


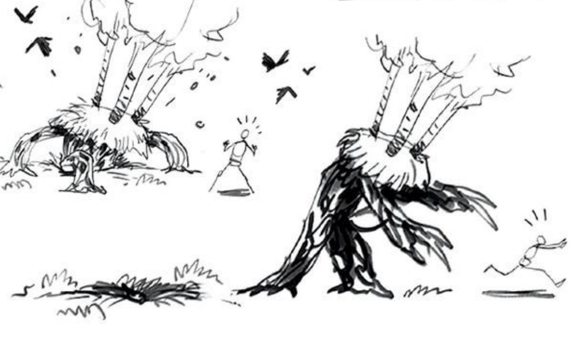
We developed a series of Fade-touched creatures that reflected the magical corruption of the forest.

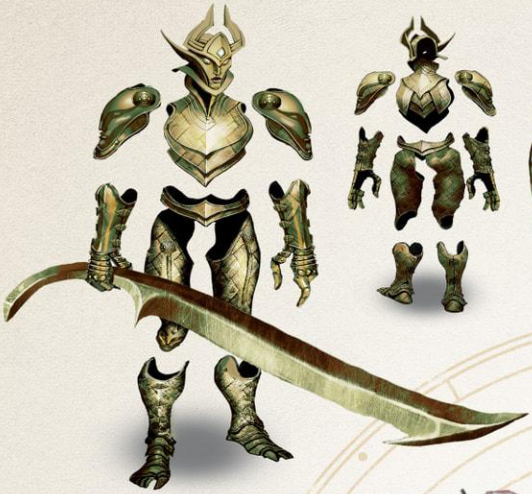
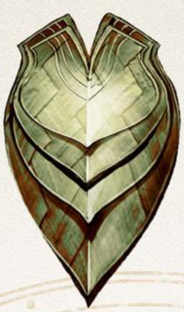
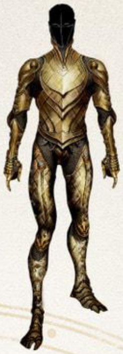
Plants that had been influenced and animated by the magical radiation that had been increasing since Solas's ritual.



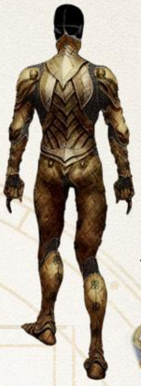
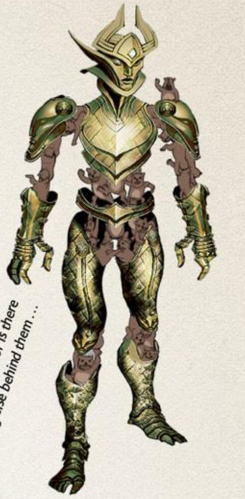
Creating tree creatures presents a huge challenge. You have to set aside the existing images in your head and try to design something that solves the issues in front of you. How do they support the setting and story? What does combat need from this creature?



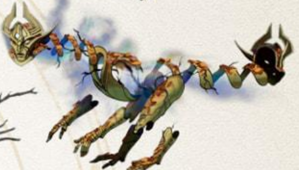
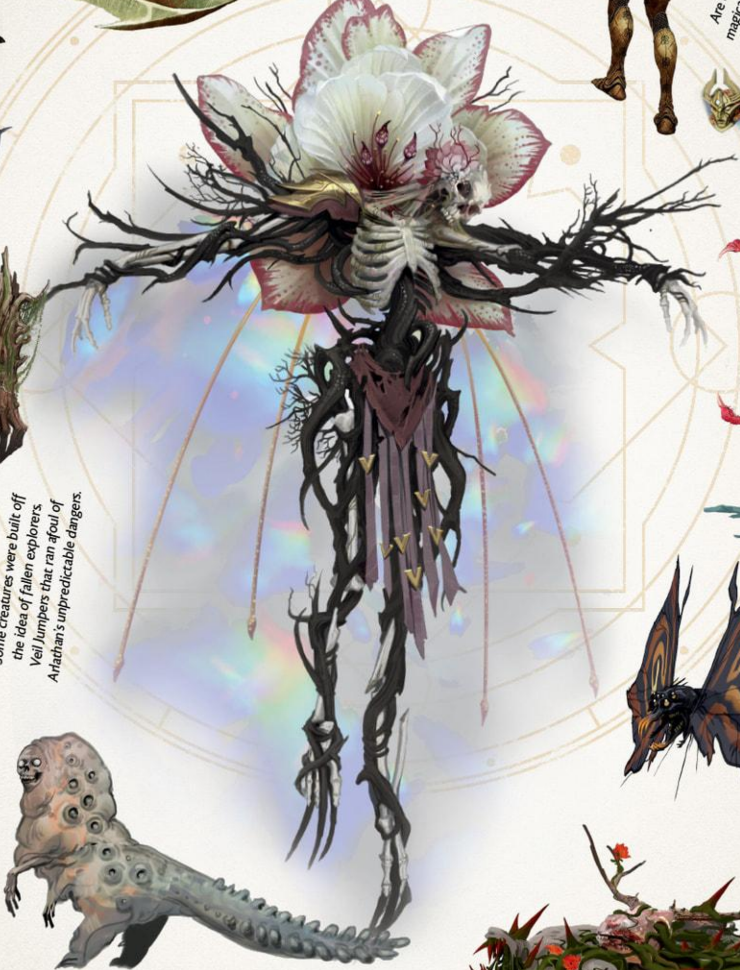
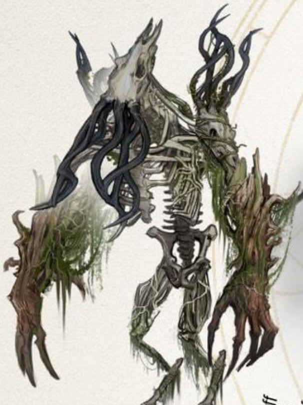
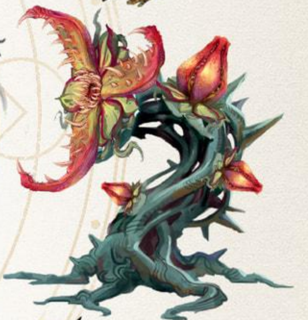


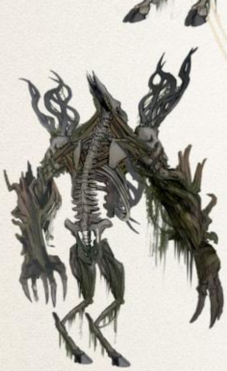
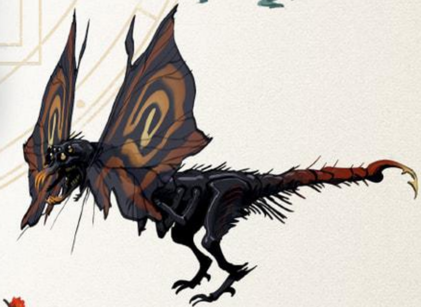
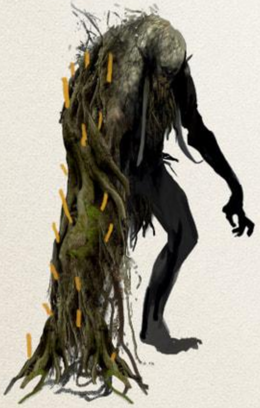
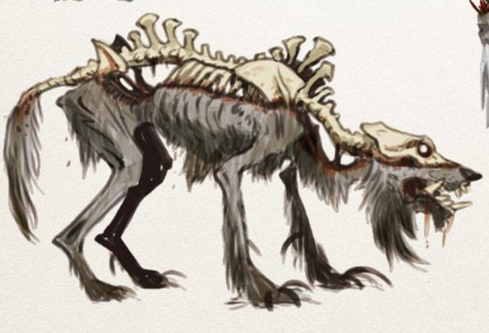
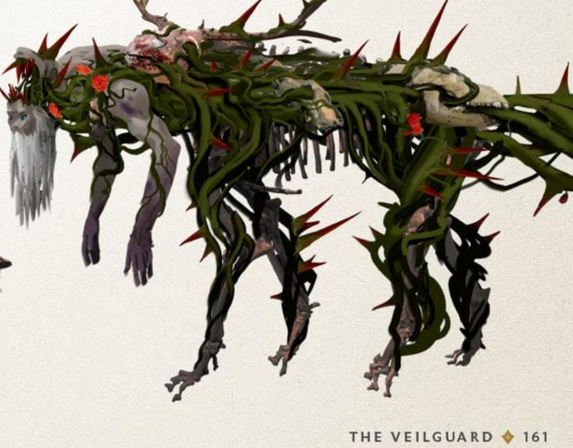
We imagined the magic of Arlathan reawakening old technology—in this case, magical security guards.

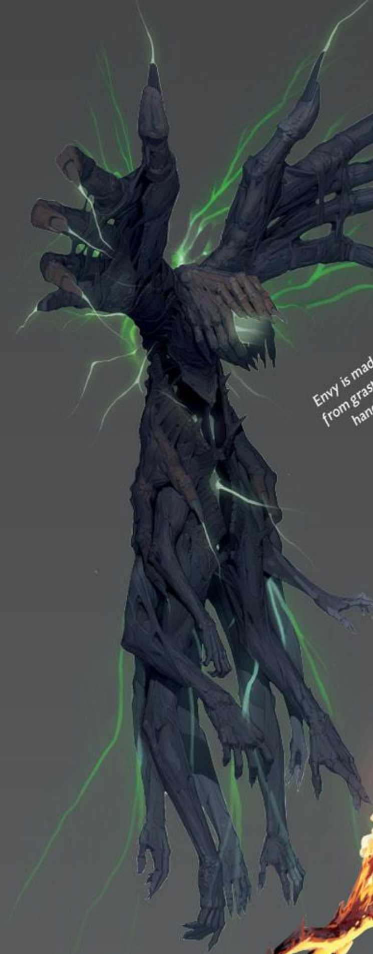



Are the Arlathan guardians magically animated, or is there something else behind them . . .

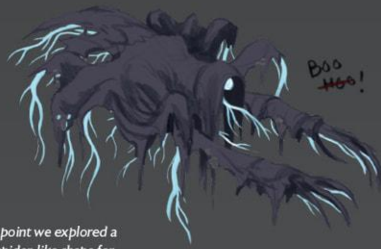





Some creatures were built off the idea of fallen explorers, Veil Jumpers that ran afoul of Arlathan's unpredictable dangers.

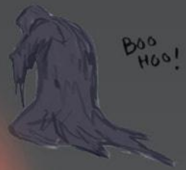






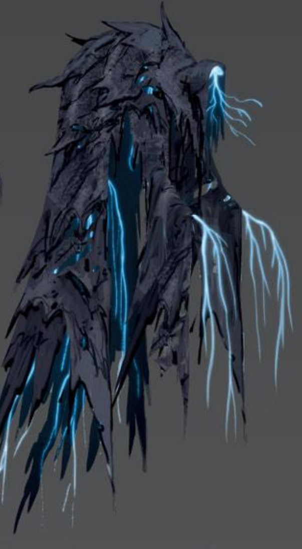


Envy is made from grasping hands.

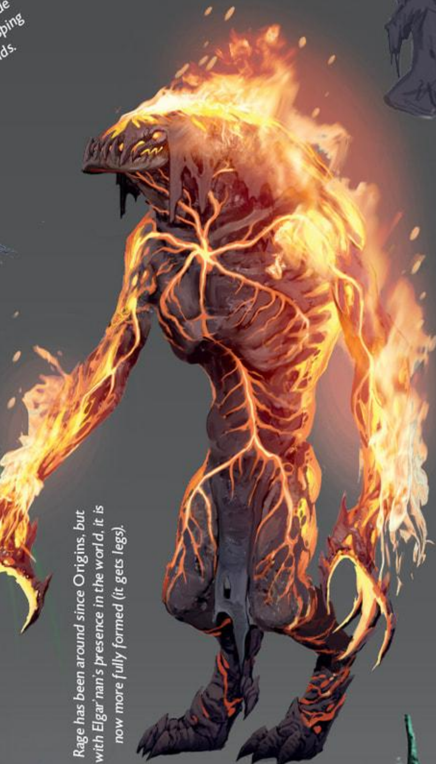


At one point we explored a more spider-like shape for the despair demon.





Despair droops under the weight of the despair it feeds on.

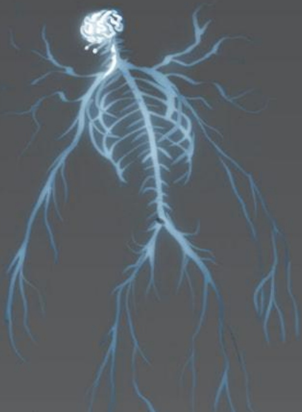


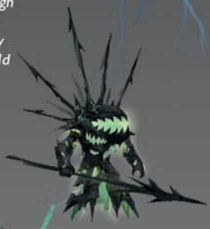
Rage has been around since Origins, but with Elgar'nan's presence in the world, it is now more fully formed (it gets legs).

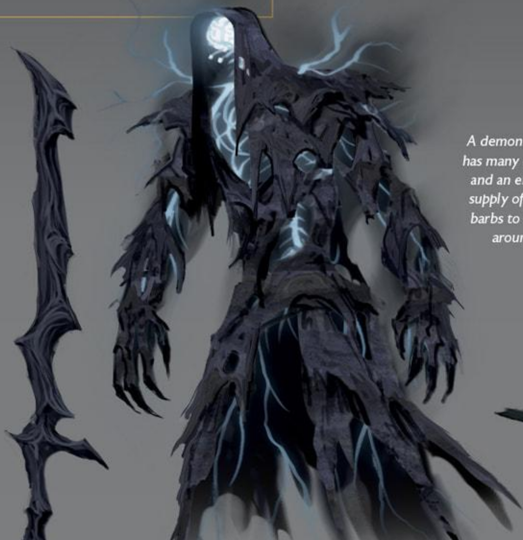
In Thedas, demons represent the danger of unchecked magic and the Fade. While they're monstrous, some are also cunning, manipulating people for their own agendas or amusement.

◆

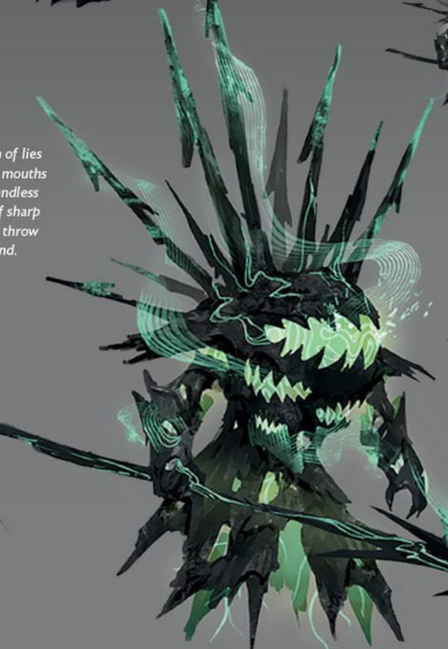
In previous Dragon Age games, the demons were among the least visually consistent factions. We wanted to make the visuals reflect the story. Starting with spirits, we went with a nervous system theme (they are creatures that feed on feelings, after all). While the early elves would form carefully crafted bodies from the dust, demons come through to our world in a hurry. Their shabby forms are barely held together.

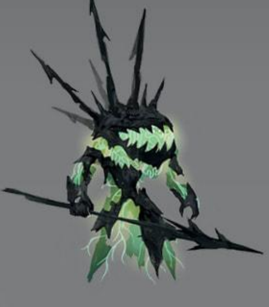




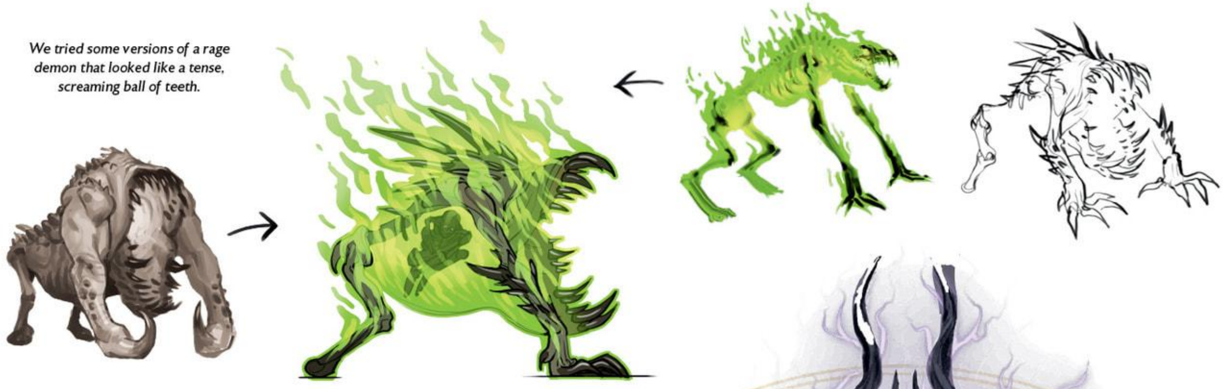


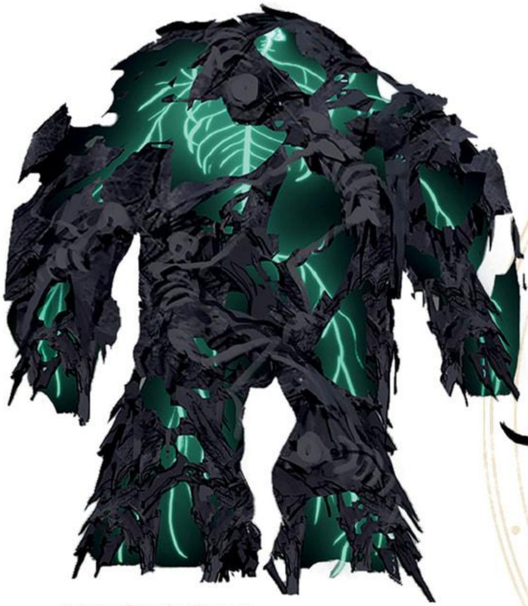
A demon of lies has many mouths and an endless supply of sharp barbs to throw around.



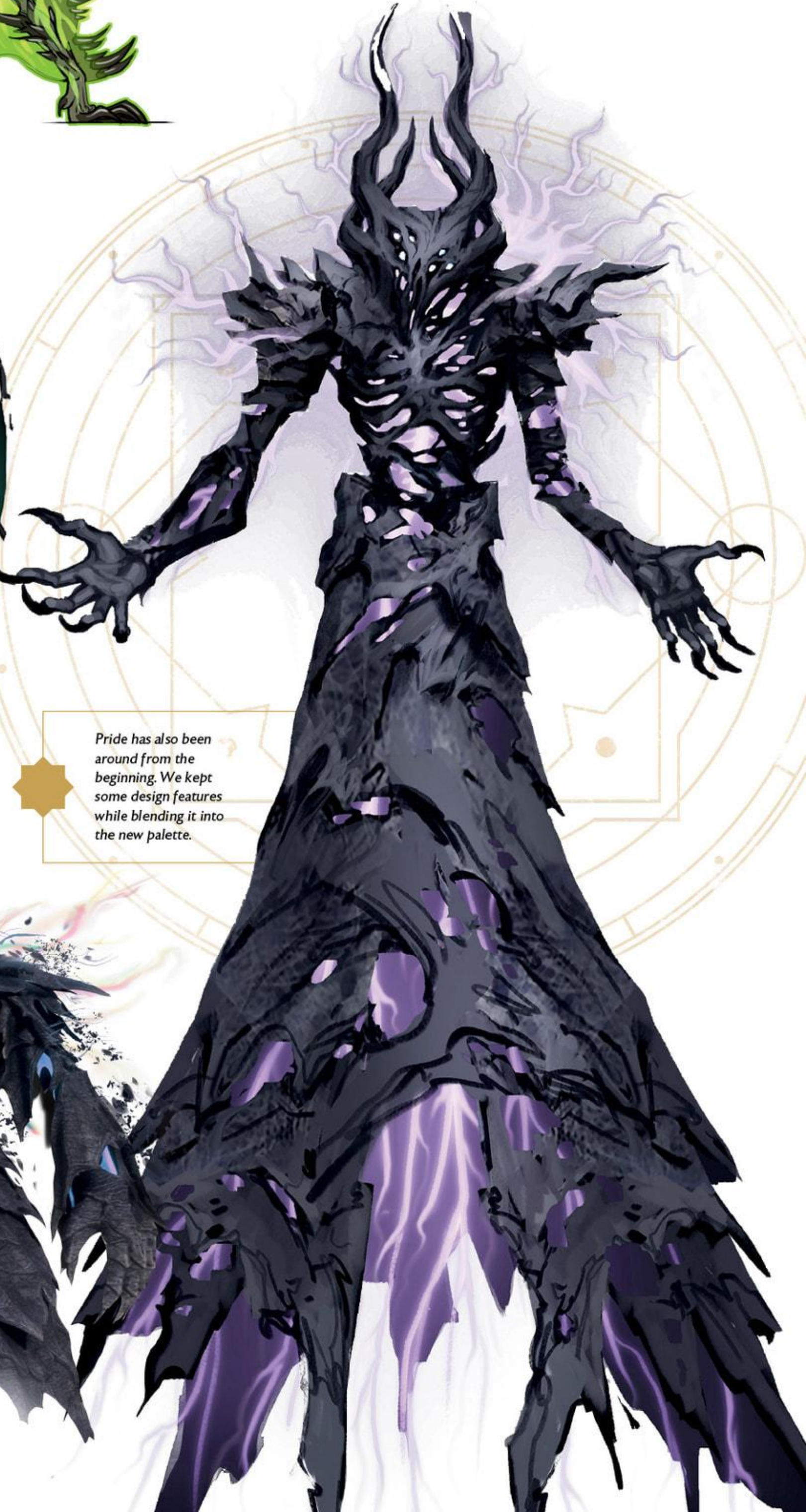


We tried some versions of a rage demon that looked like a tense, screaming ball of teeth.

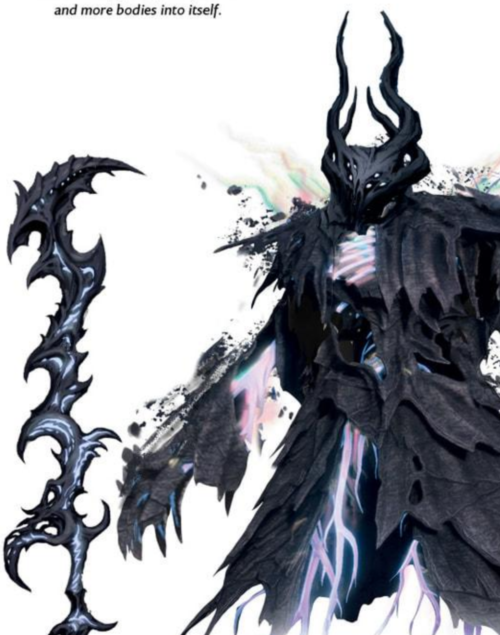




A demon of greed, pulling more and more bodies into itself.



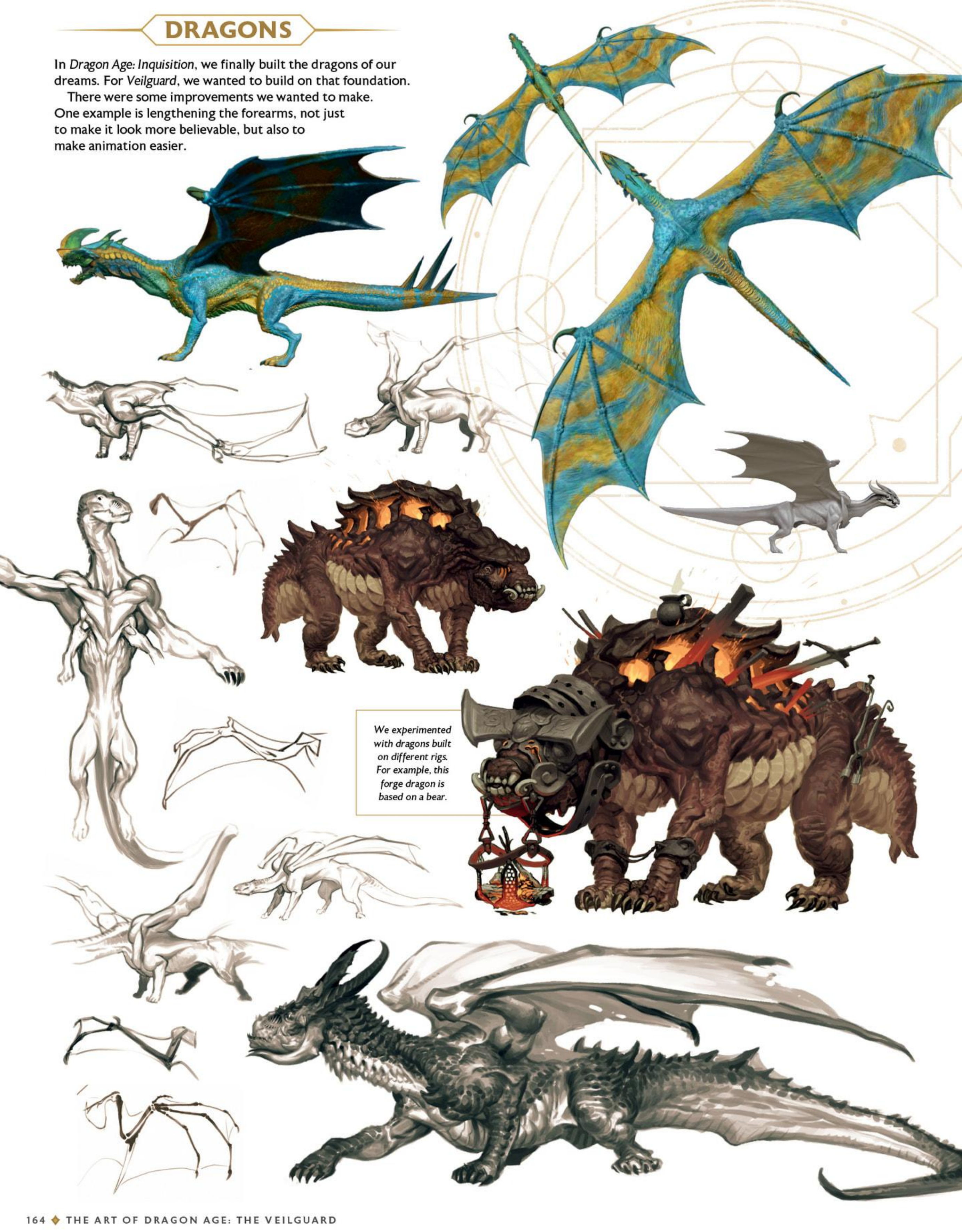
Pride has also been around from the beginning. We kept some design features while blending it into the new palette.



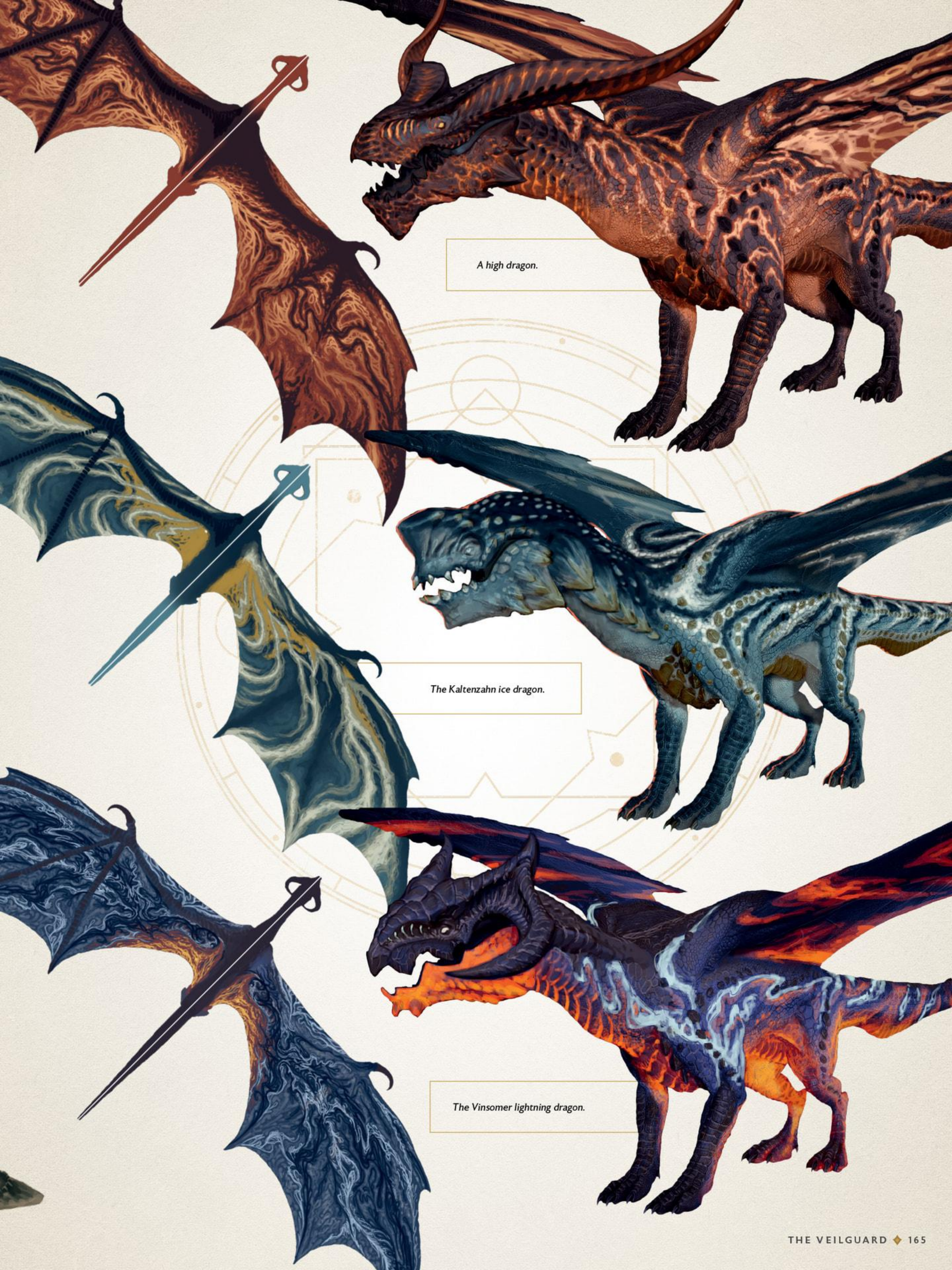
DRAGONS

In *Dragon Age: Inquisition*, we finally built the dragons of our dreams. For *Veilguard*, we wanted to build on that foundation.

There were some improvements we wanted to make. One example is lengthening the forearms, not just to make it look more believable, but also to make animation easier.



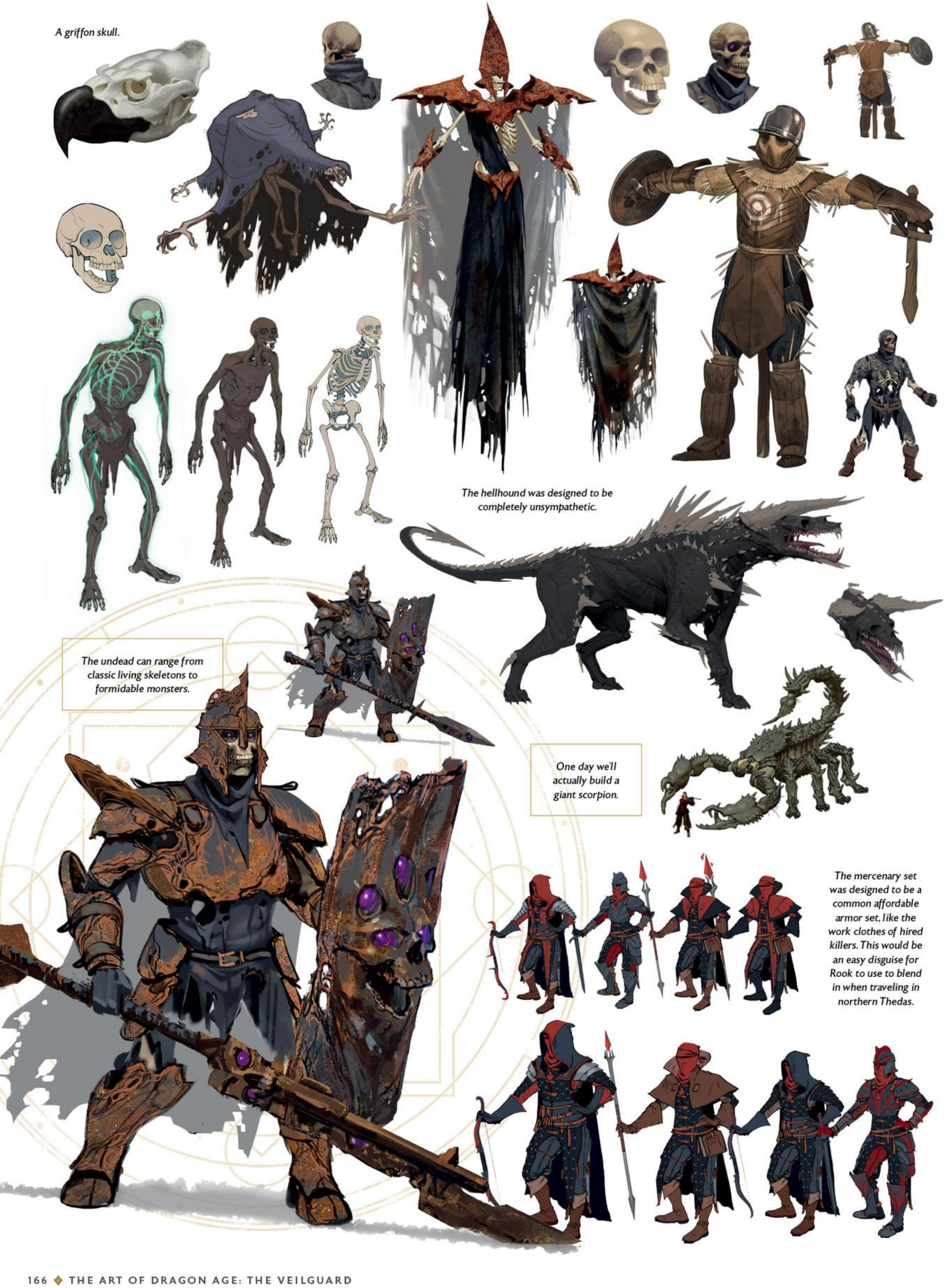
We experimented with dragons built on different rigs. For example, this forge dragon is based on a bear.



A high dragon.

The Kaltenzahn ice dragon.

The Vinsomer lightning dragon.



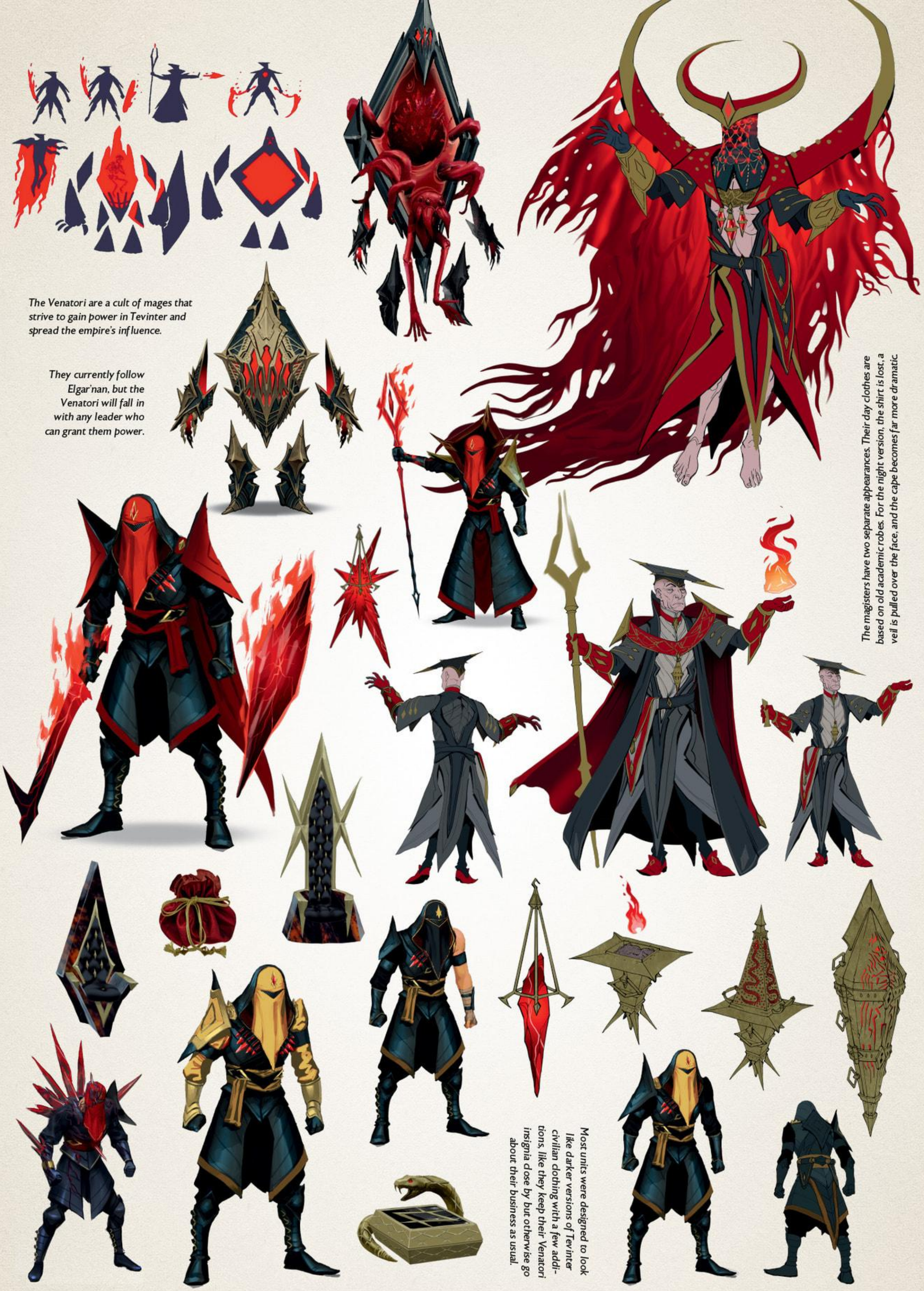
A griffon skull.

The hellhound was designed to be completely unsympathetic.

The undead can range from classic living skeletons to formidable monsters.

One day we'll actually build a giant scorpion.

The mercenary set was designed to be a common affordable armor set, like the work clothes of hired killers. This would be an easy disguise for Rook to use to blend in when traveling in northern Thedas.



The Venatori are a cult of mages that strive to gain power in Tevinter and spread the empire's influence.

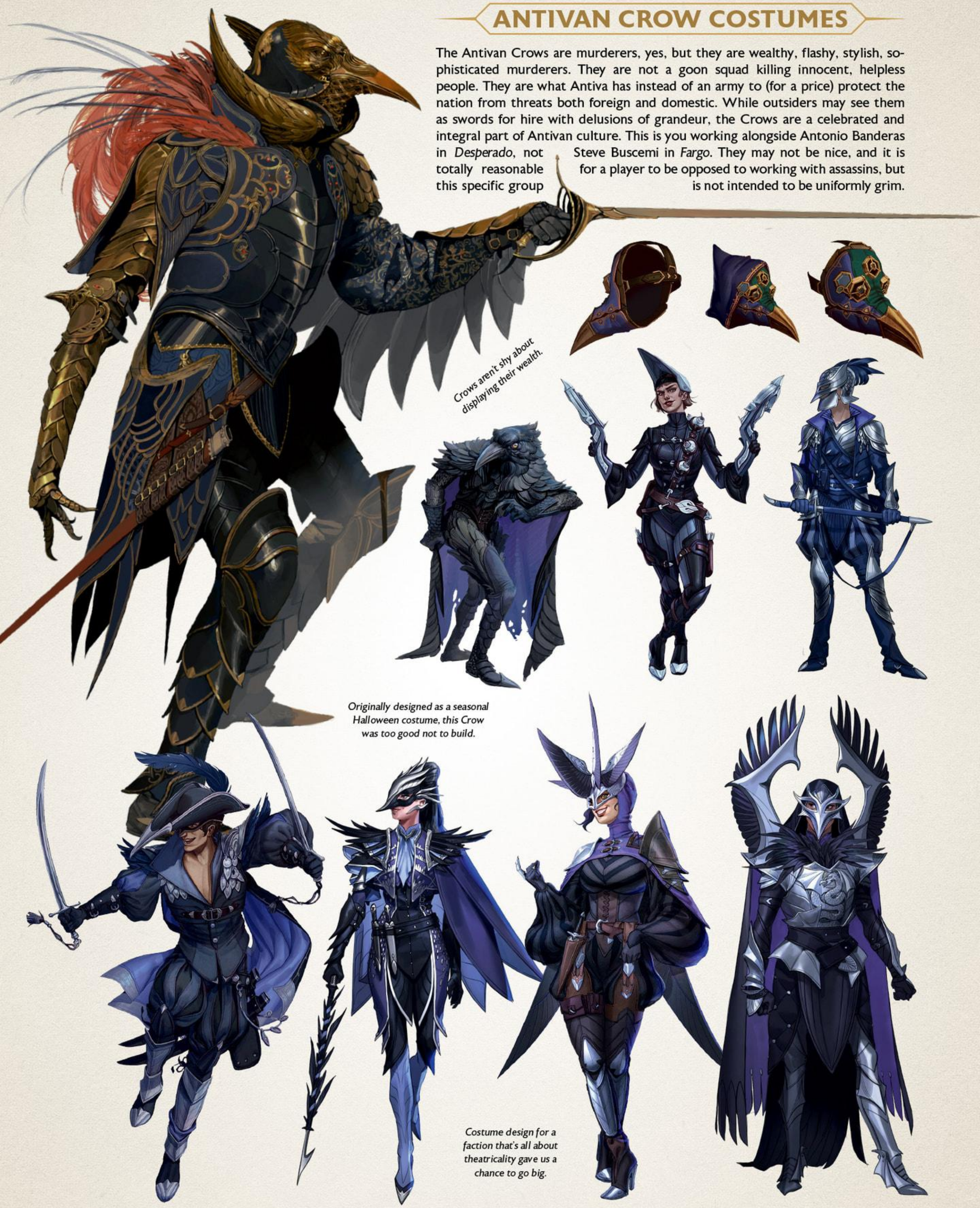
They currently follow Elgar'nan, but the Venatori will fall in with any leader who can grant them power.

The magisters have two separate appearances. Their day clothes are based on old academic robes. For the night version, the shirt is lost, a veil is pulled over the face, and the cape becomes far more dramatic.

Most units were designed to look like darker versions of Tevinter civilian clothing with a few additions, like they keep their Venatori insignia close by but otherwise go about their business as usual.

ANTIVAN CROW COSTUMES

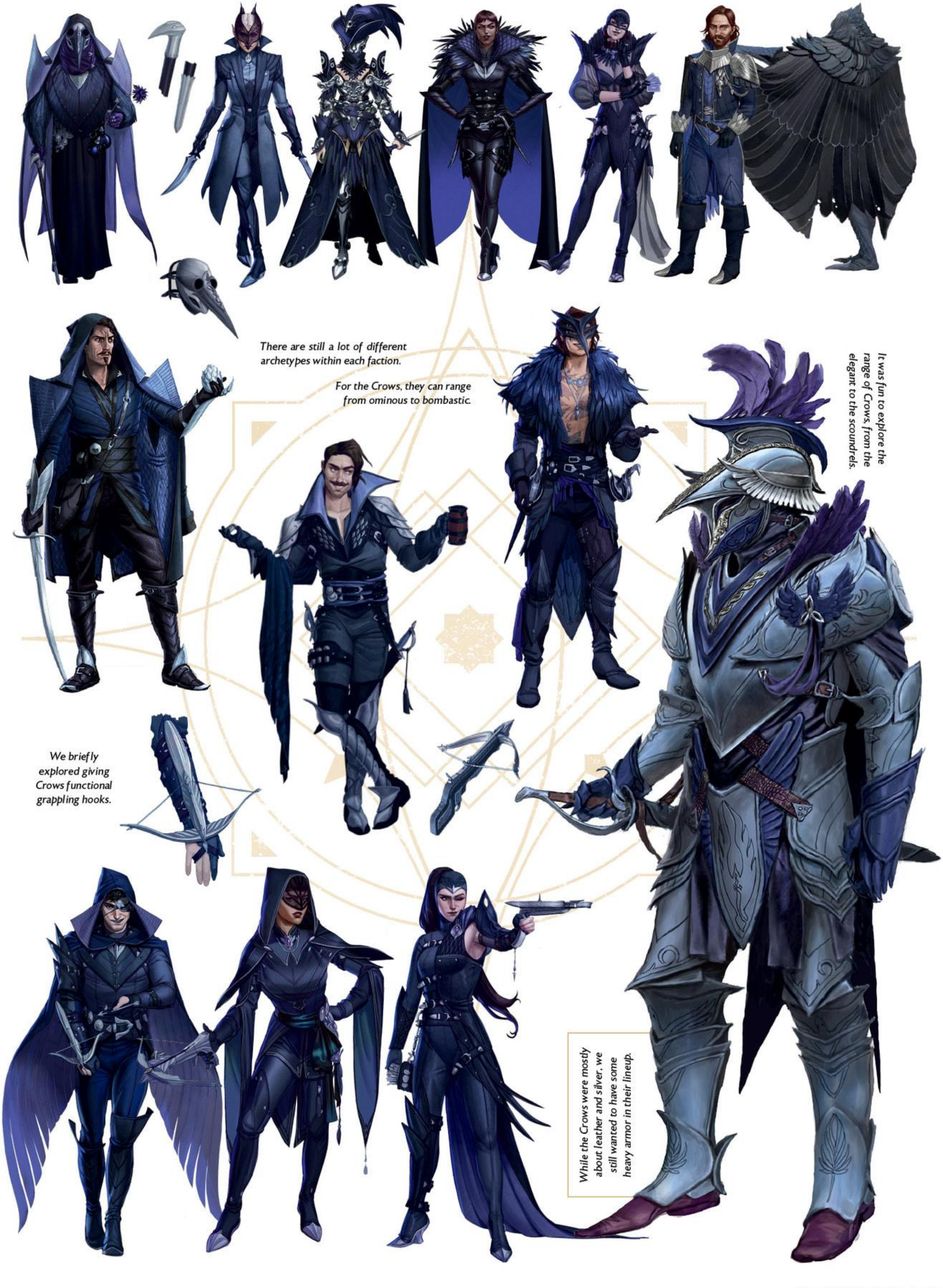
The Antivan Crows are murderers, yes, but they are wealthy, flashy, stylish, sophisticated murderers. They are not a goon squad killing innocent, helpless people. They are what Antiva has instead of an army to (for a price) protect the nation from threats both foreign and domestic. While outsiders may see them as swords for hire with delusions of grandeur, the Crows are a celebrated and integral part of Antivan culture. This is you working alongside Antonio Banderas in *Desperado*, not Steve Buscemi in *Fargo*. They may not be nice, and it is totally reasonable for a player to be opposed to working with assassins, but this specific group is not intended to be uniformly grim.



Crows aren't shy about displaying their wealth.

Originally designed as a seasonal Halloween costume, this Crow was too good not to build.

Costume design for a faction that's all about theatricality gave us a chance to go big.



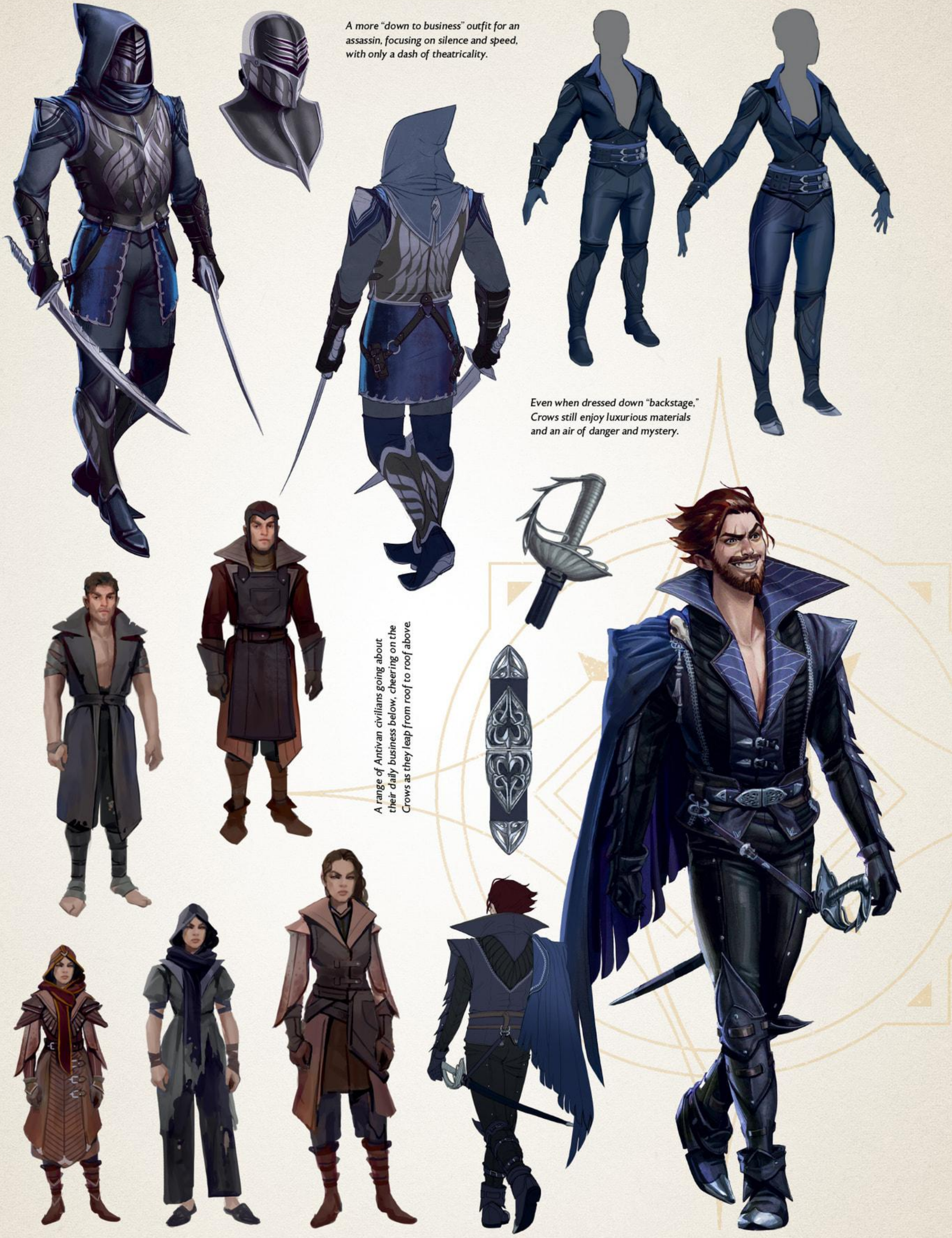
There are still a lot of different archetypes within each faction.

For the Crows, they can range from ominous to bombastic.

It was fun to explore the range of Crows, from the elegant to the scoundrels.

We briefly explored giving Crows functional grappling hooks.

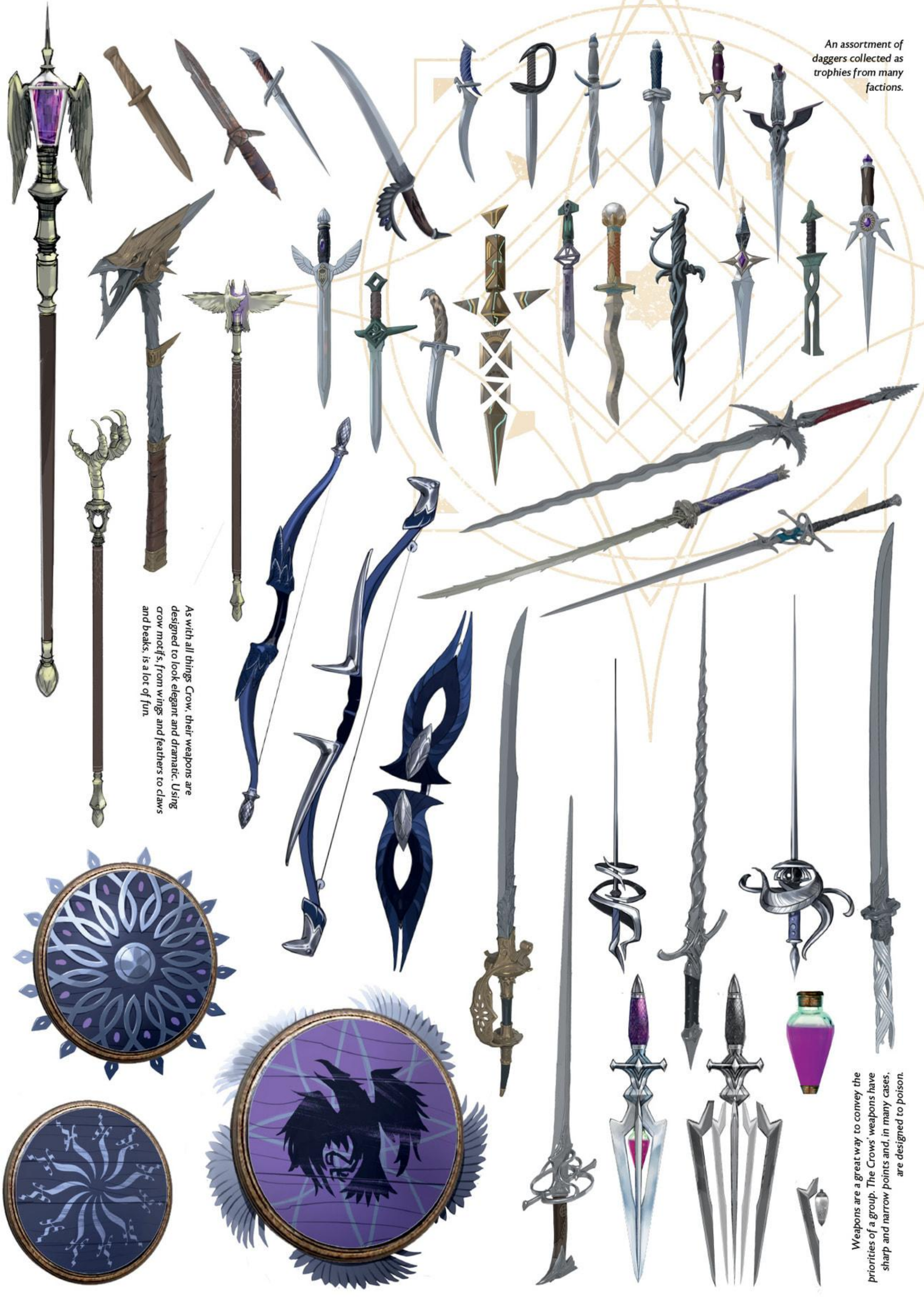
While the Crows were mostly about leather and silver, we still wanted to have some heavy armor in their lineup.



A more "down to business" outfit for an assassin, focusing on silence and speed, with only a dash of theatricality.

Even when dressed down "backstage," Crows still enjoy luxurious materials and an air of danger and mystery.

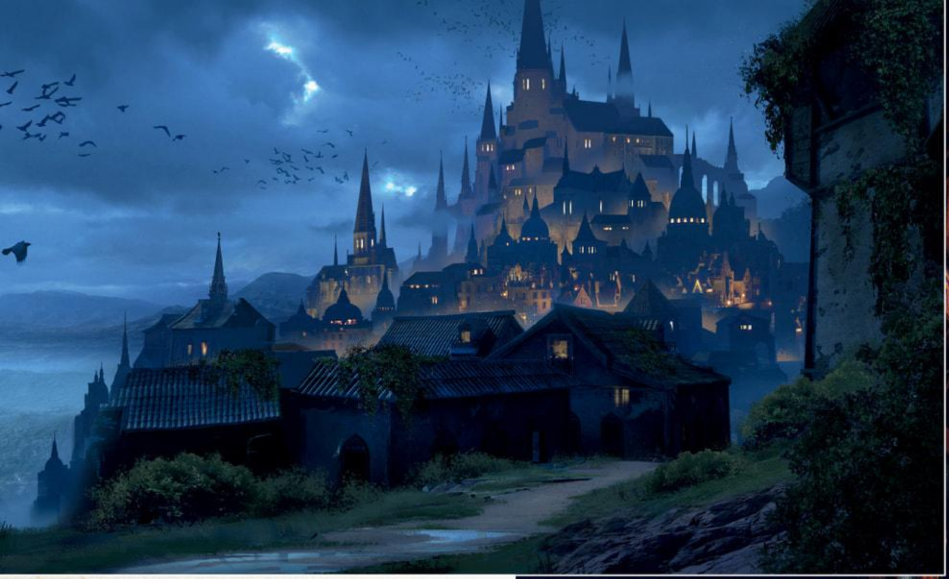
A range of Antivan civilians going about their daily business below, cheering on the Crows as they leap from roof to roof above.



An assortment of daggers collected as trophies from many factions.

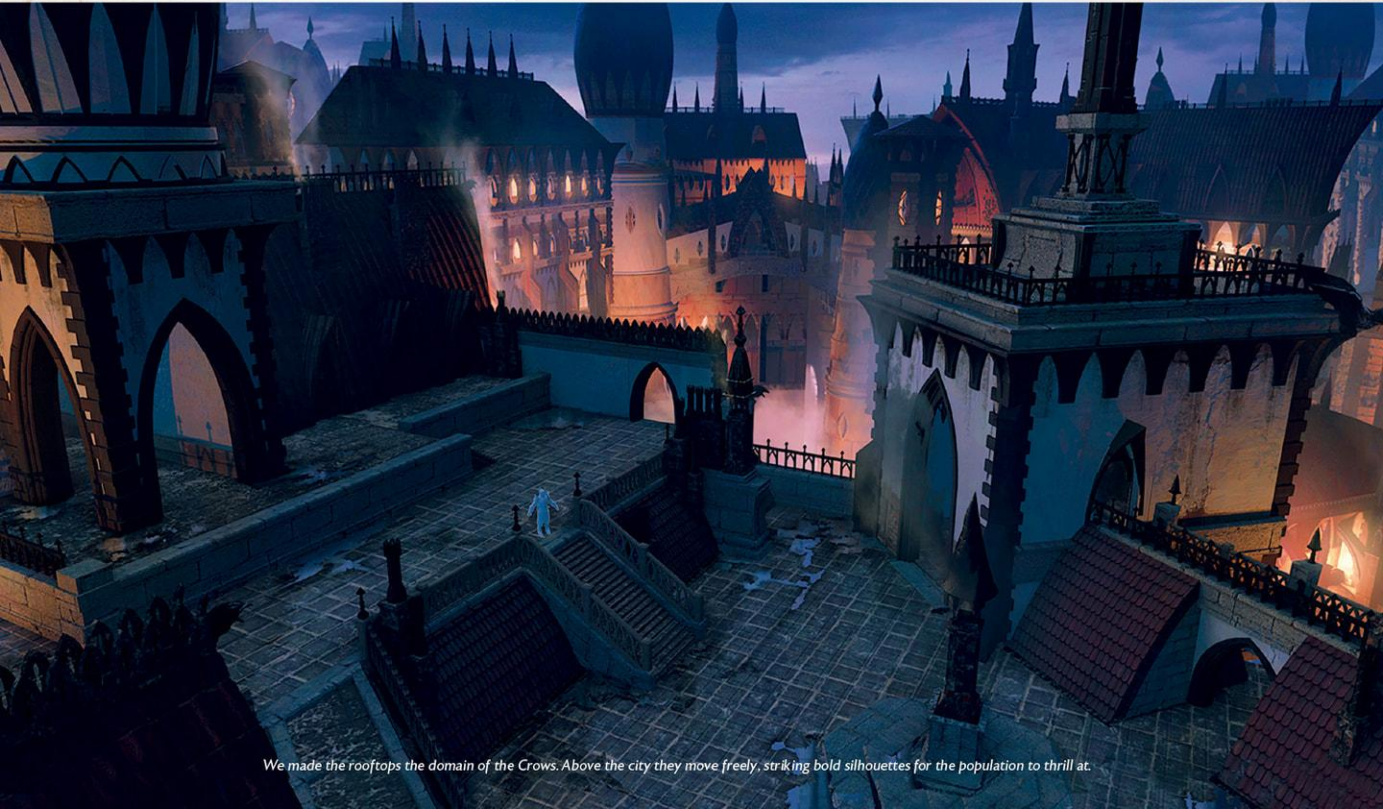
As with all things Crow, their weapons are designed to look elegant and dramatic. Using crow motifs, from wings and feathers to claws and beaks, is a lot of fun.

Weapons are a great way to convey the priorities of a group. The Crows' weapons have sharp and narrow points and, in many cases, are designed to poison.

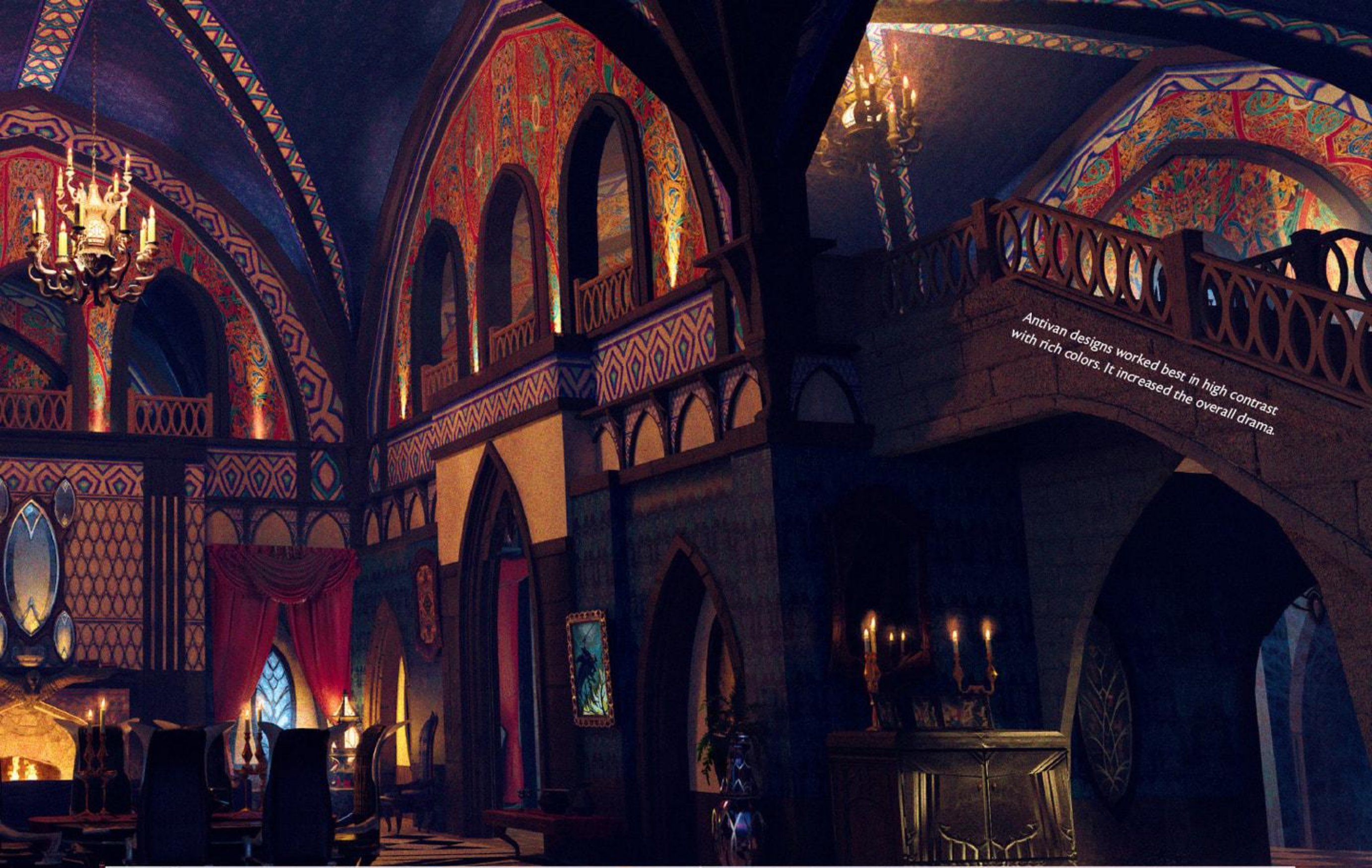


ANTIVA

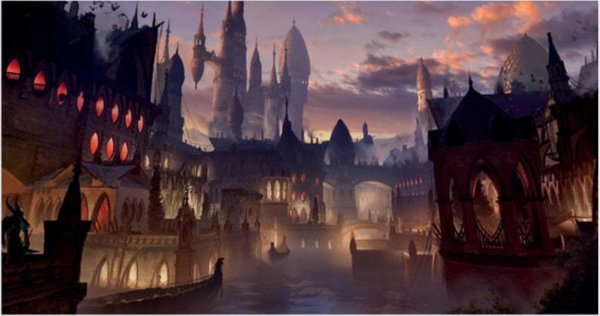
We wanted the city of assassins to be opulent, seductive, and theatrical. The tongue-in-cheek design concept was 24/7 *Batman* opera: dark roofs to perch on, rich interiors with daggers behind every curtain.

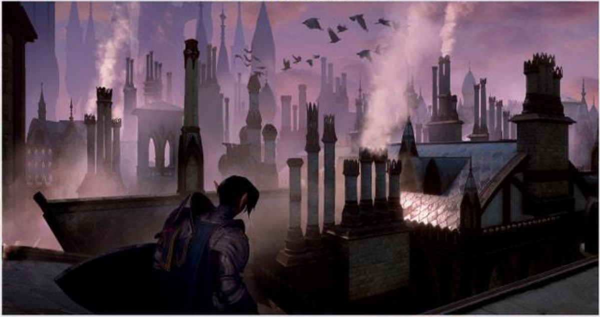


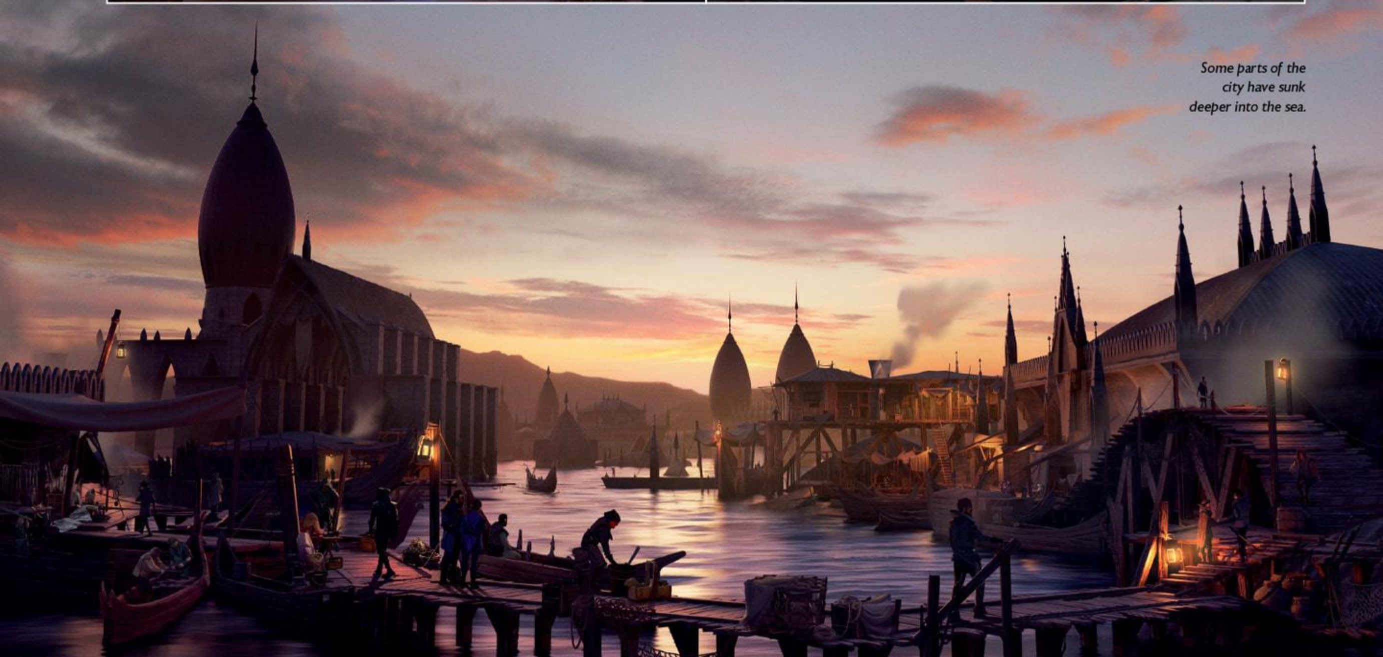
We made the rooftops the domain of the Crows. Above the city they move freely, striking bold silhouettes for the population to thrill at.



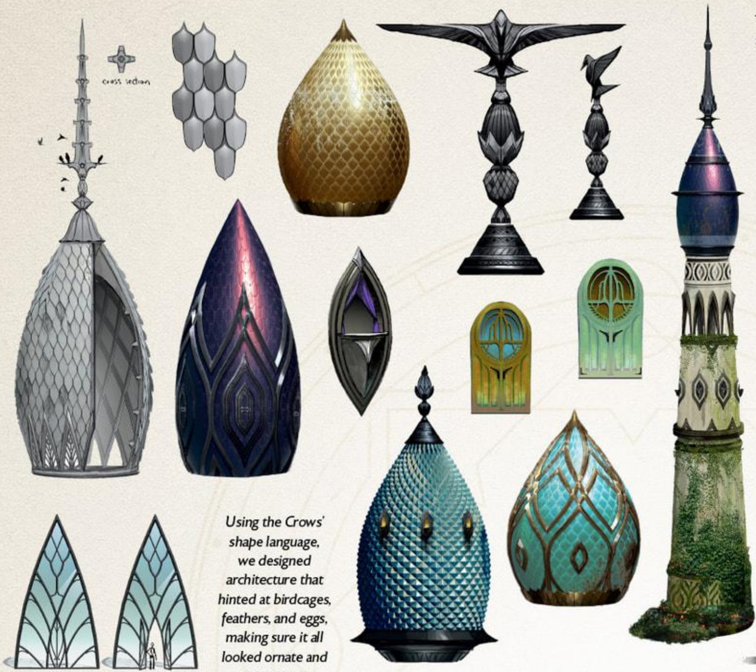
Antivan designs worked best in high contrast with rich colors. It increased the overall drama.





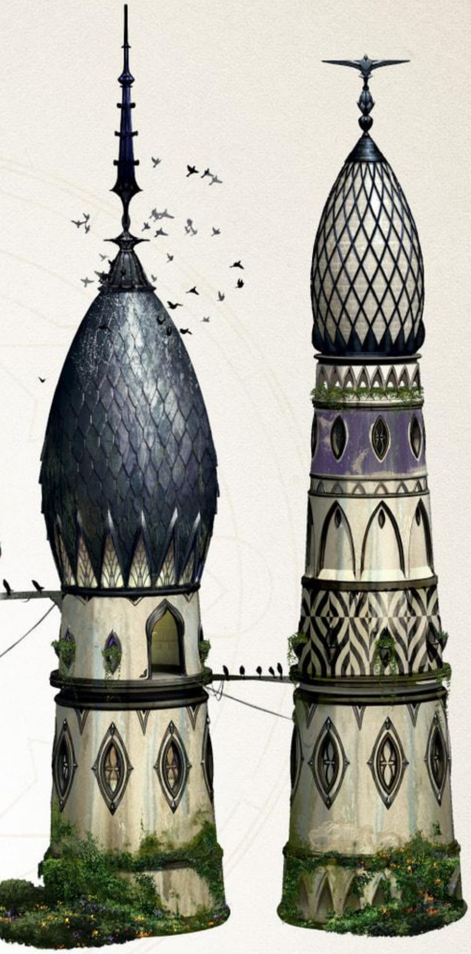


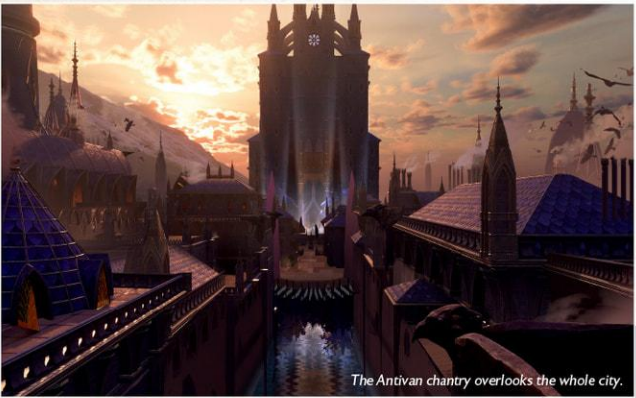
Some parts of the city have sunk deeper into the sea.



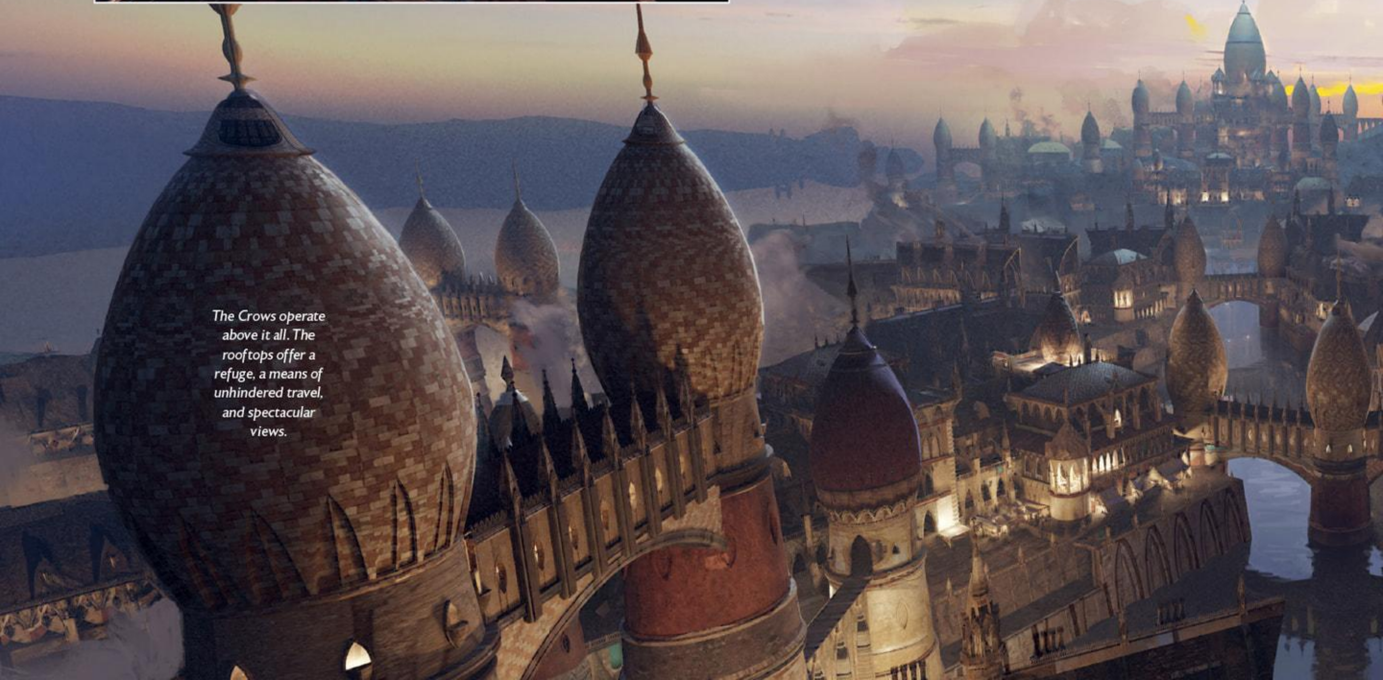
Using the Crows' shape language, we designed architecture that hinted at birdcages, feathers, and eggs, making sure it all looked ornate and extravagant.

The Crows are a pillar of Antiva, and like a sports fan hanging up their team's flag, many people will allude to them through their decor.

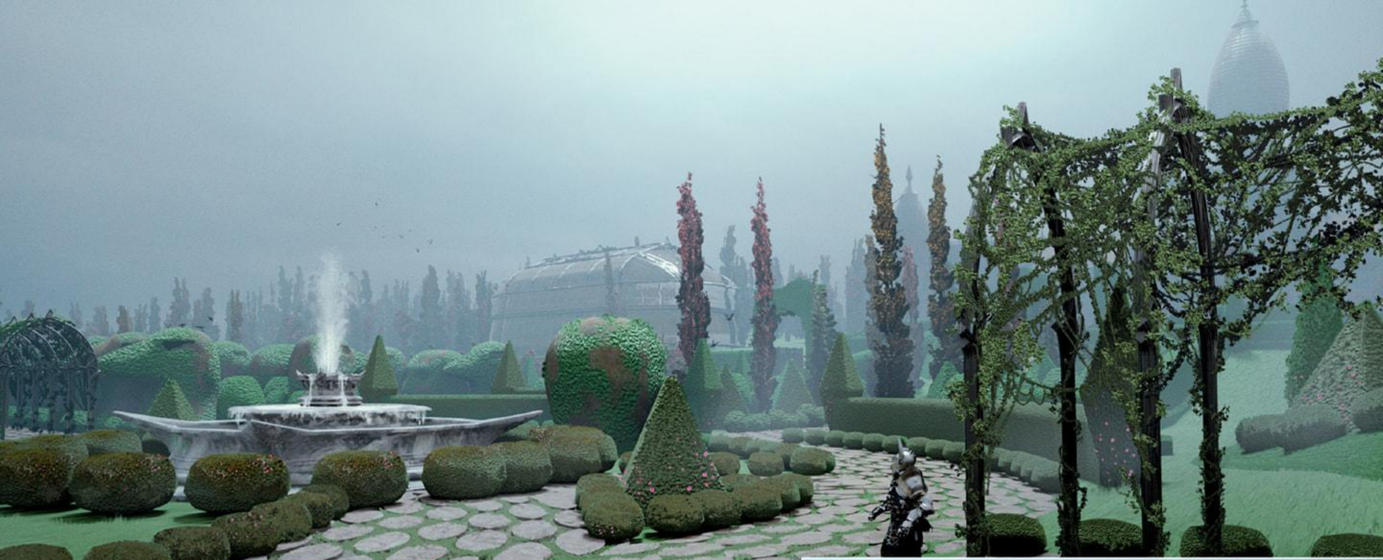


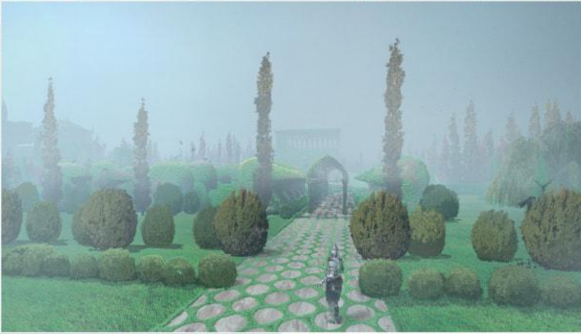


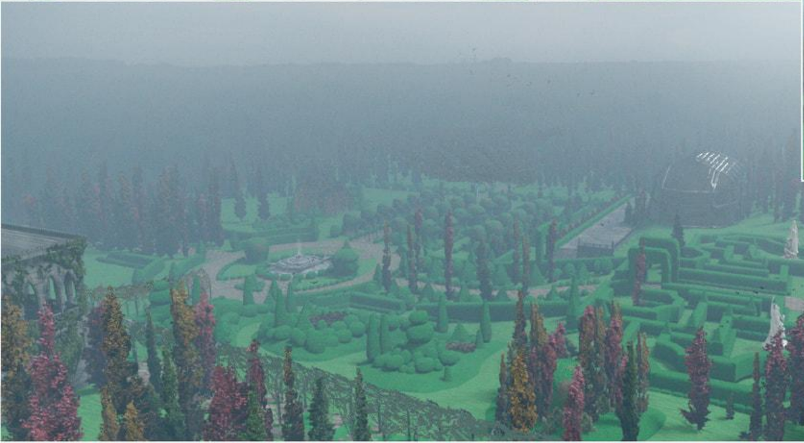
The Antivan chantry overlooks the whole city.



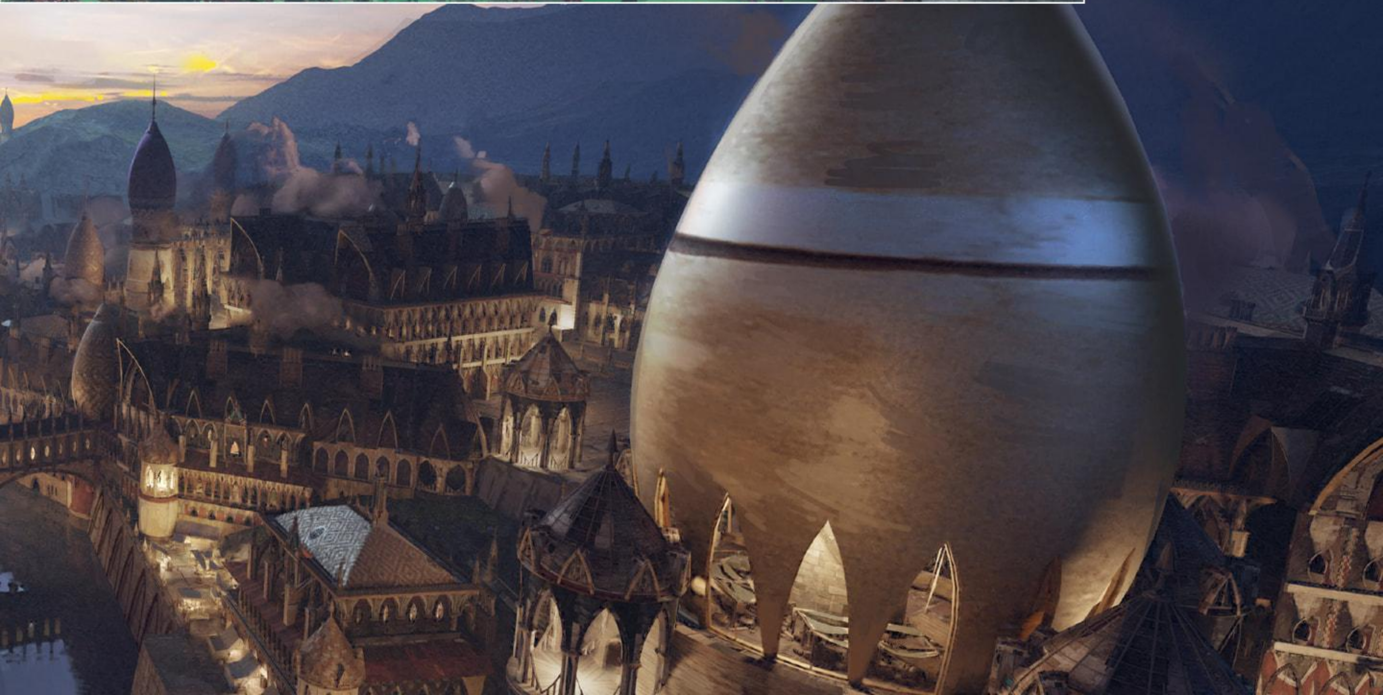
The Crows operate above it all. The rooftops offer a refuge, a means of unhindered travel, and spectacular views.



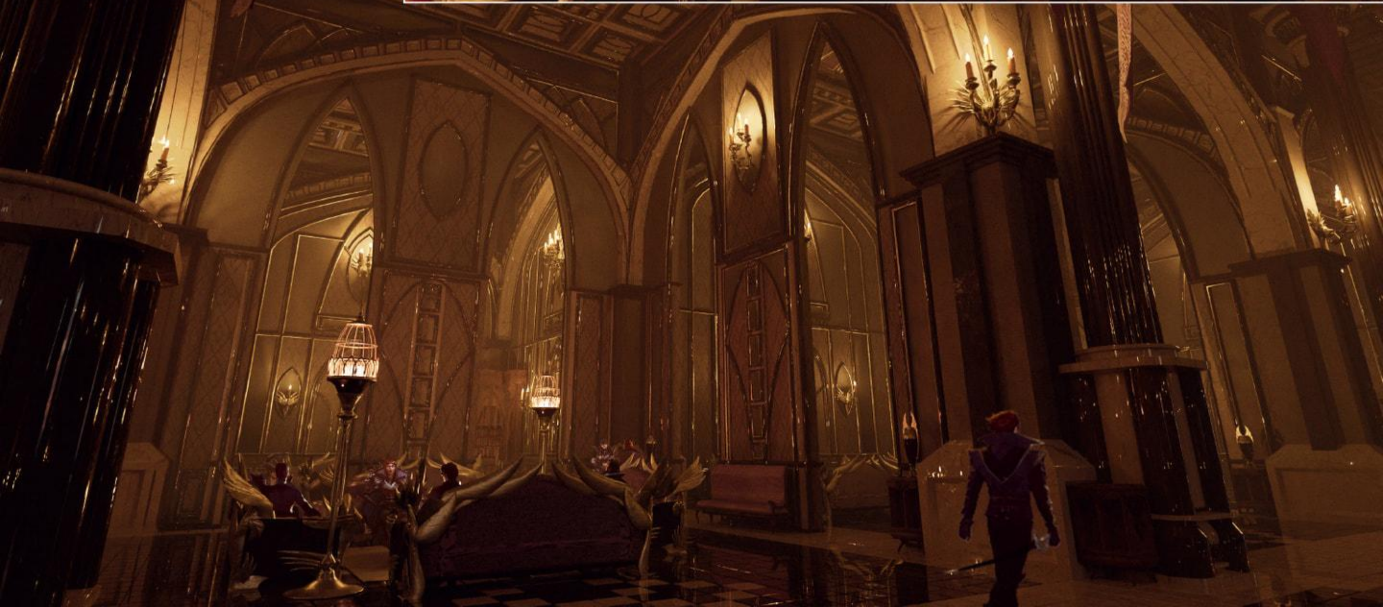


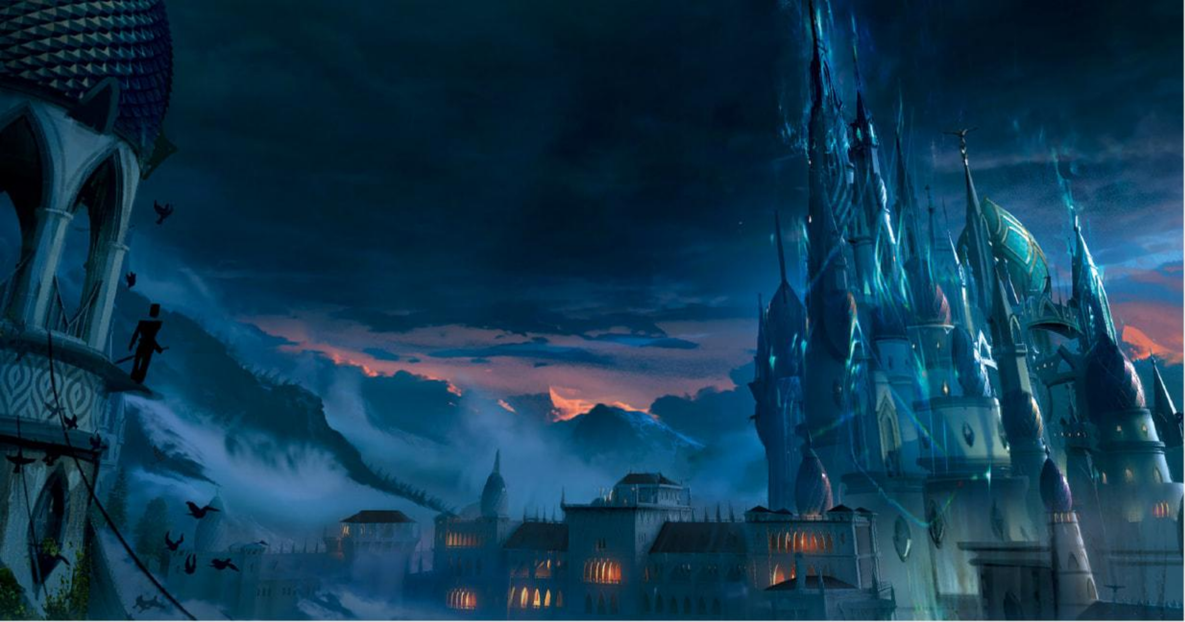


Wealthy Antivans splurge on vast gardens. Many have built-in escape routes should the Crows come for them.

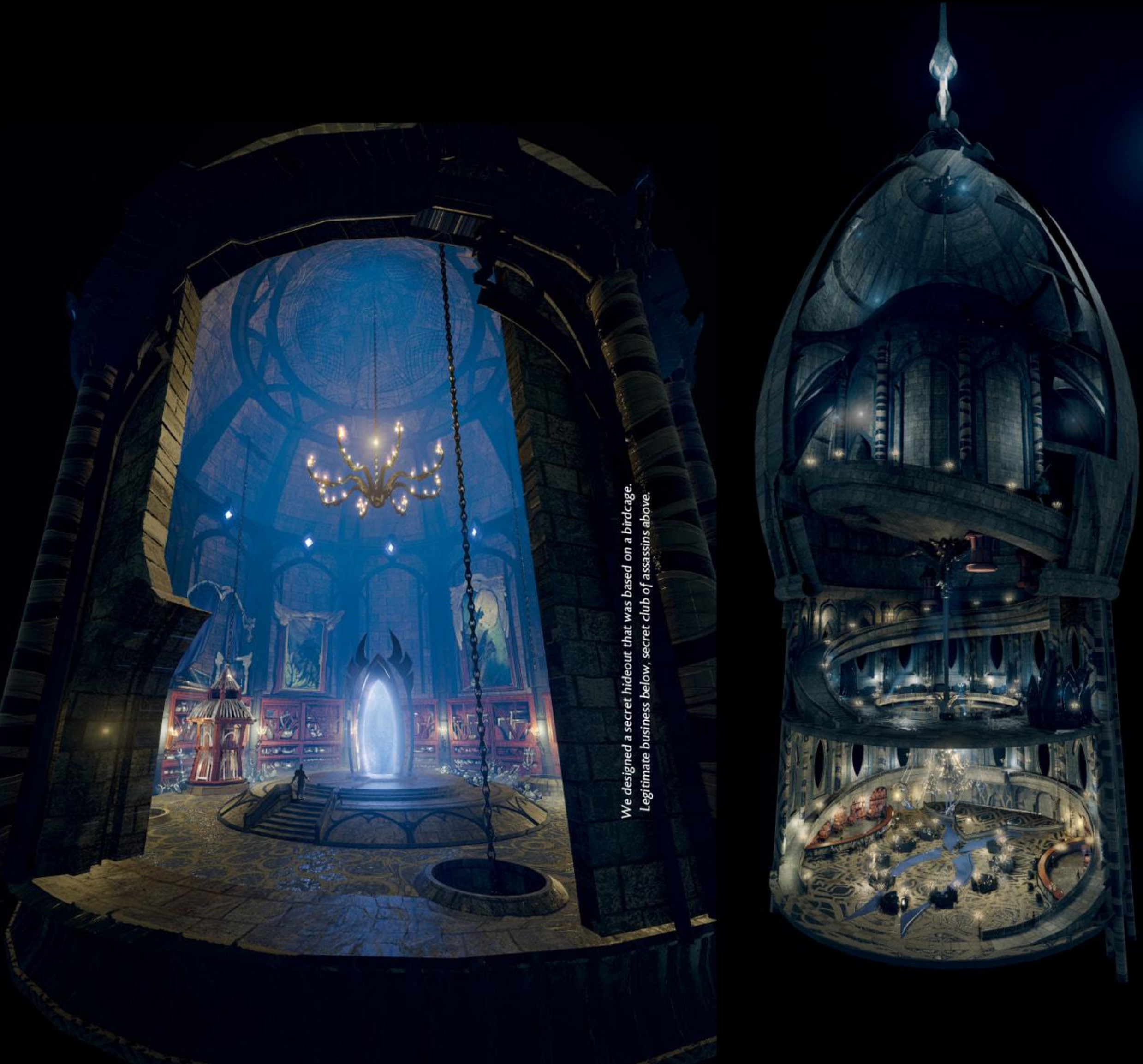


An Antivan casino, a mostly legitimate front for the Antivan Crows' secret base of operations.

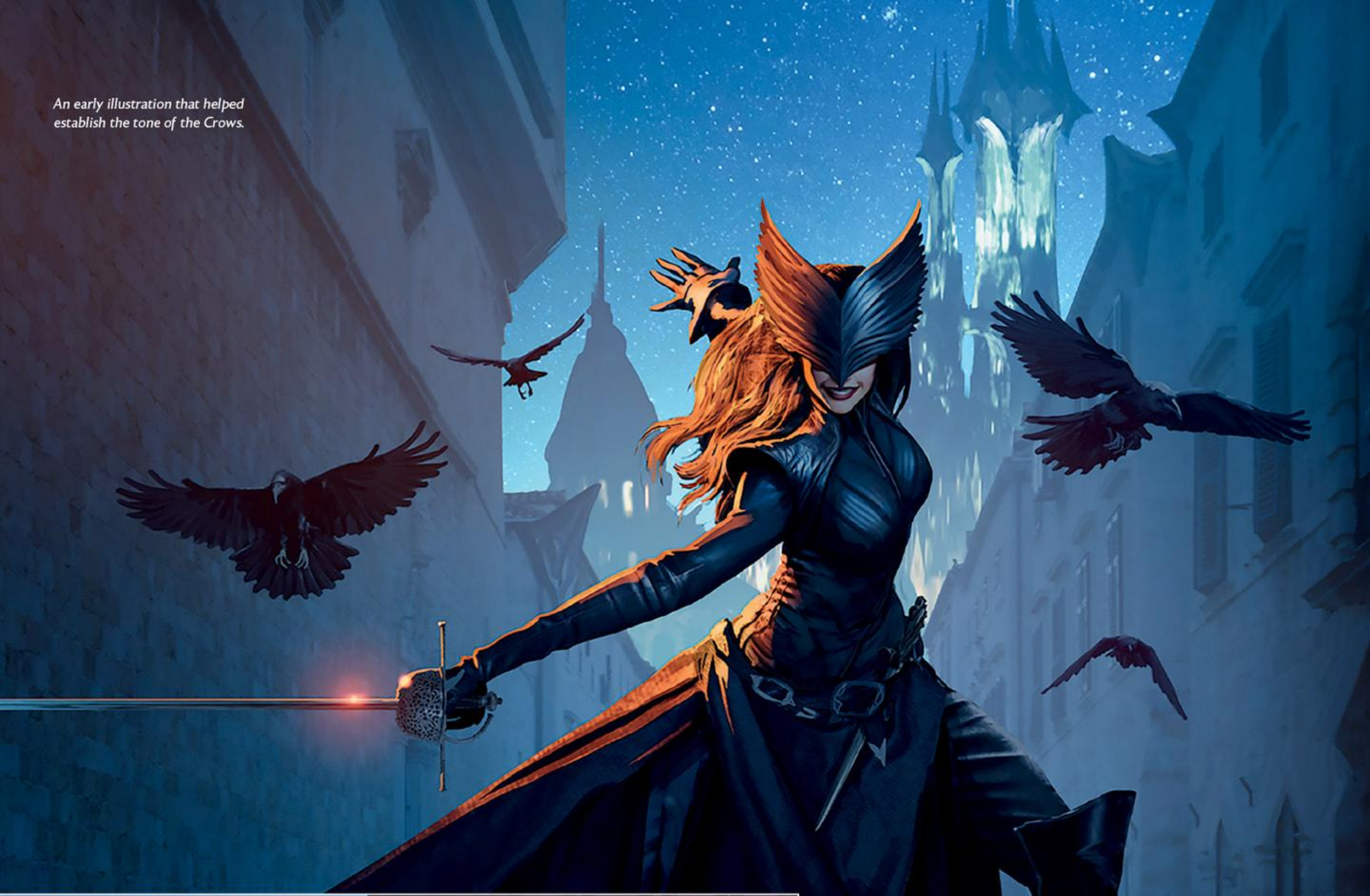




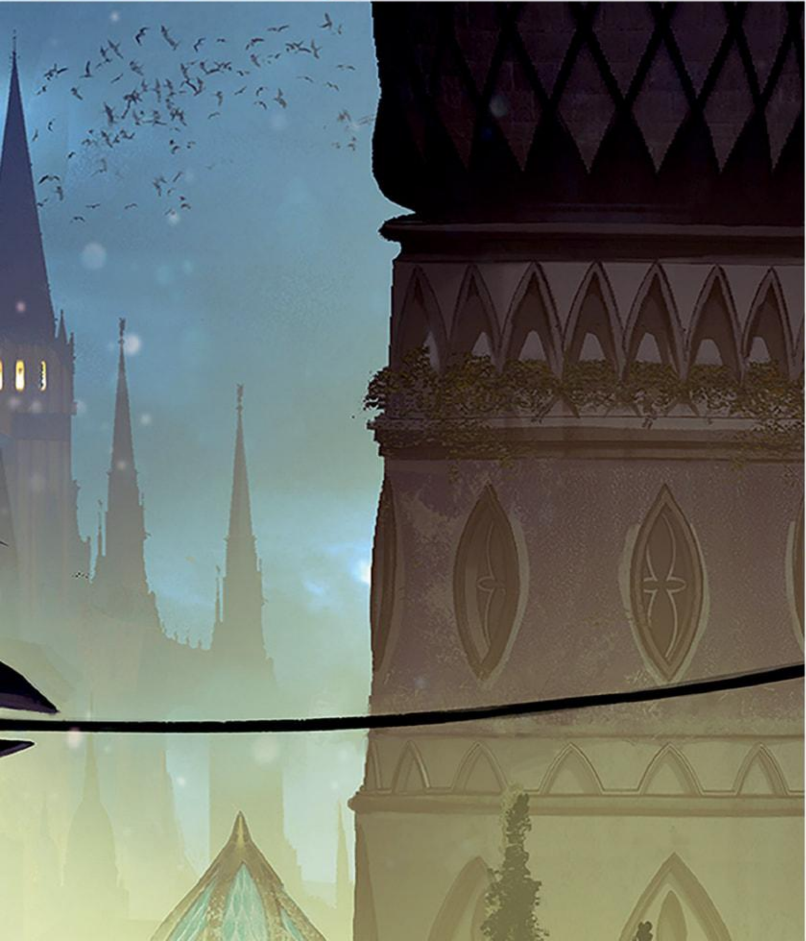
The Antivan Circle of Mages, another major landmark of the city.



We designed a secret hideout that was based on a birdcage. Legitimate business below, secret club of assassins above.



An early illustration that helped establish the tone of the Crows.

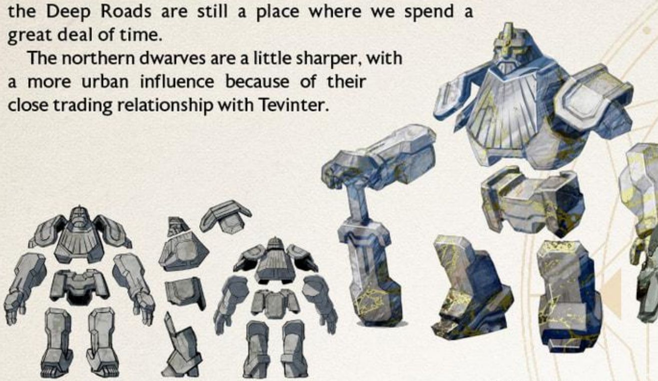


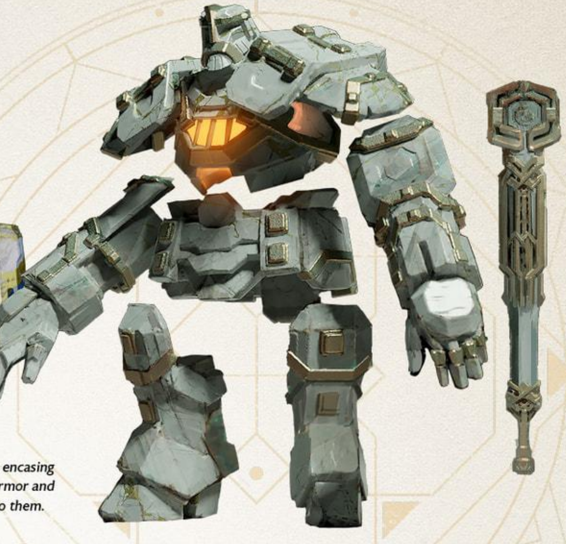
An assassination is part killing, part theater.

DWARVES

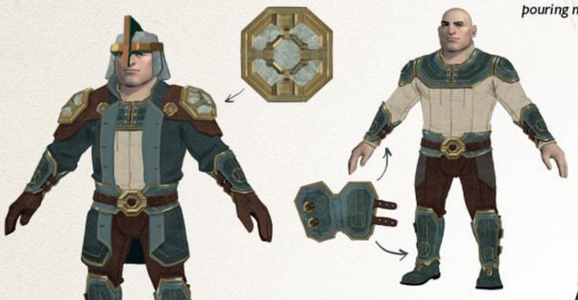
While not home to a playable faction this time around, the Deep Roads are still a place where we spend a great deal of time.

The northern dwarves are a little sharper, with a more urban influence because of their close trading relationship with Tevinter.



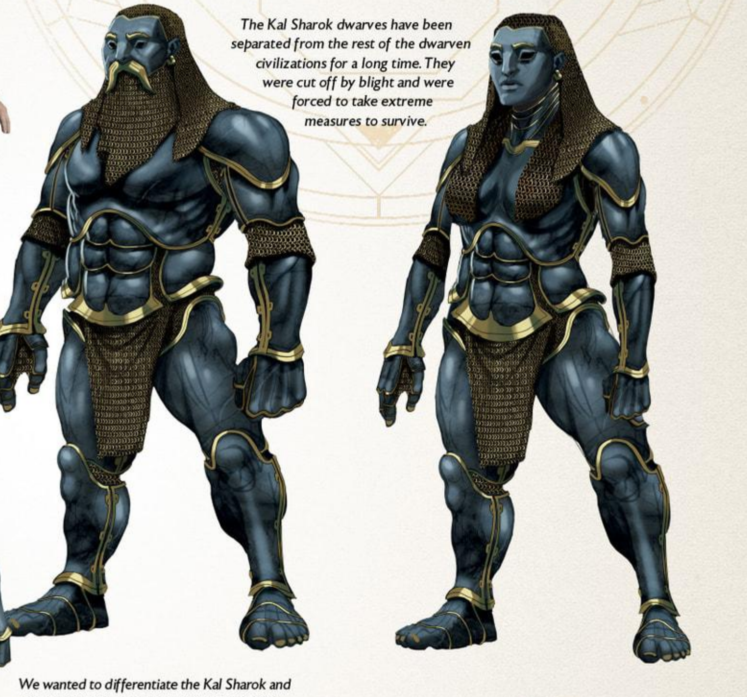


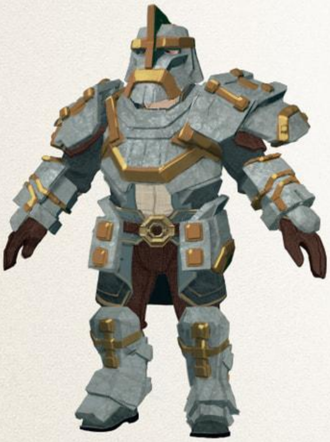
Dwarves created golems by encasing a living volunteer in stone armor and pouring molten lyrium into them.



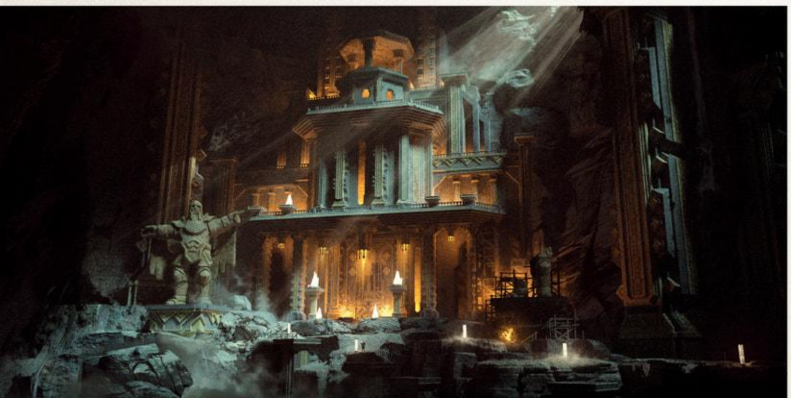
Often we design in layers. For this costume set, we started with the clothing and ended with armor based on the golem.

The Kal Sharok dwarves have been separated from the rest of the dwarven civilizations for a long time. They were cut off by blight and were forced to take extreme measures to survive.



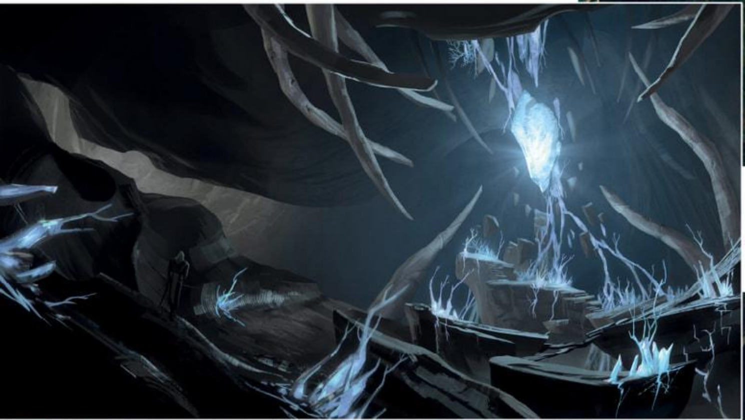


We wanted to differentiate the Kal Sharok and their culture from the rest of the Thedosian dwarves we've met previously. Instead of sharp angles and flat planes, we went for a more naturalistic sculpting approach. They carve armor for themselves that reflects the anatomy beneath.



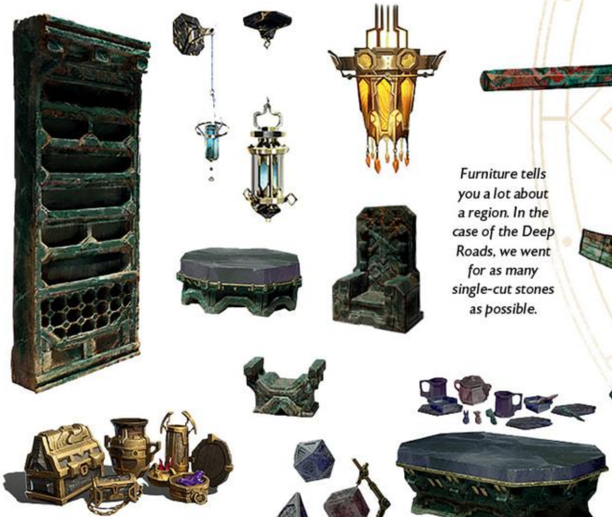
A hall of colossal Paragon statues, slowly sinking in the lava.

The Deep Roads have been a recurring location since Dragon Age: Origins. *In many ways we simply wanted to do them justice, creating something familiar to players while also adding drama and surprise.*

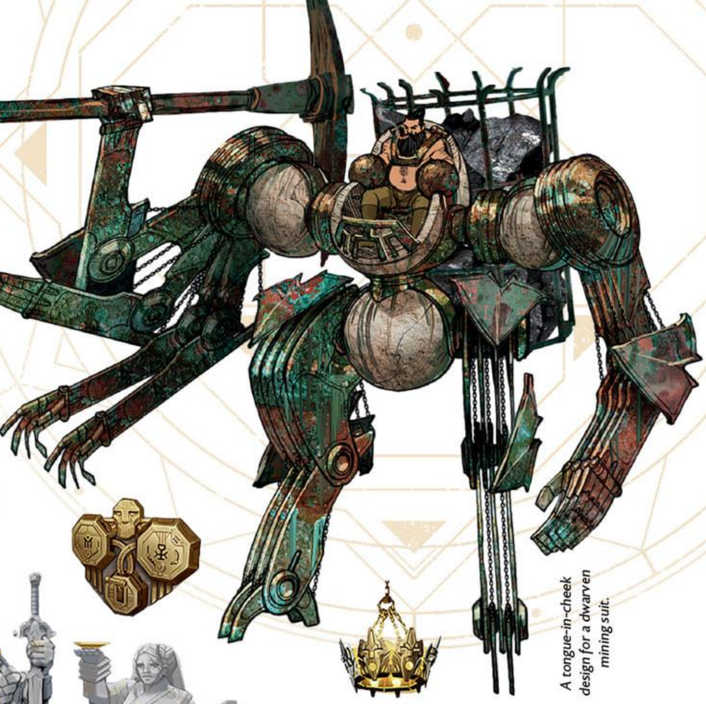


Lyrium is the crystallized blood of the Titans. We tried to subtly arrange it like blood vessels or organs.

Epic vistas are great, but it can be just as enjoyable to design the humble living spaces in a region.

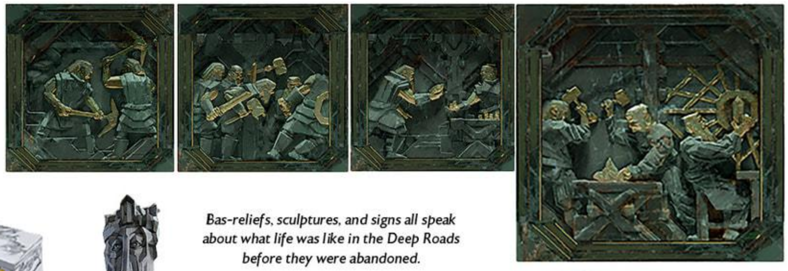


Furniture tells you a lot about a region. In the case of the Deep Roads, we went for as many single-cut stones as possible.

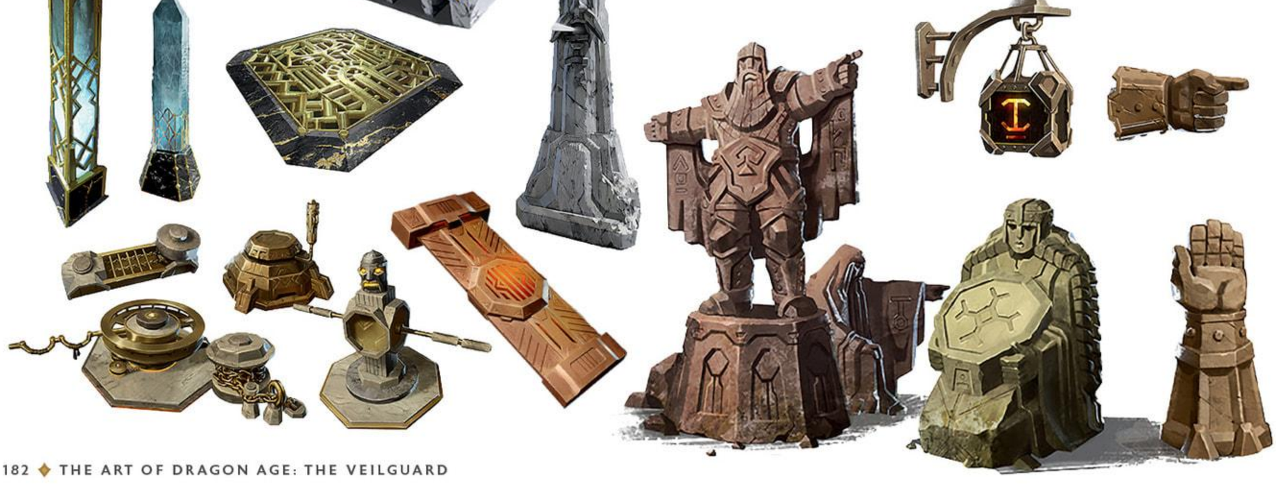


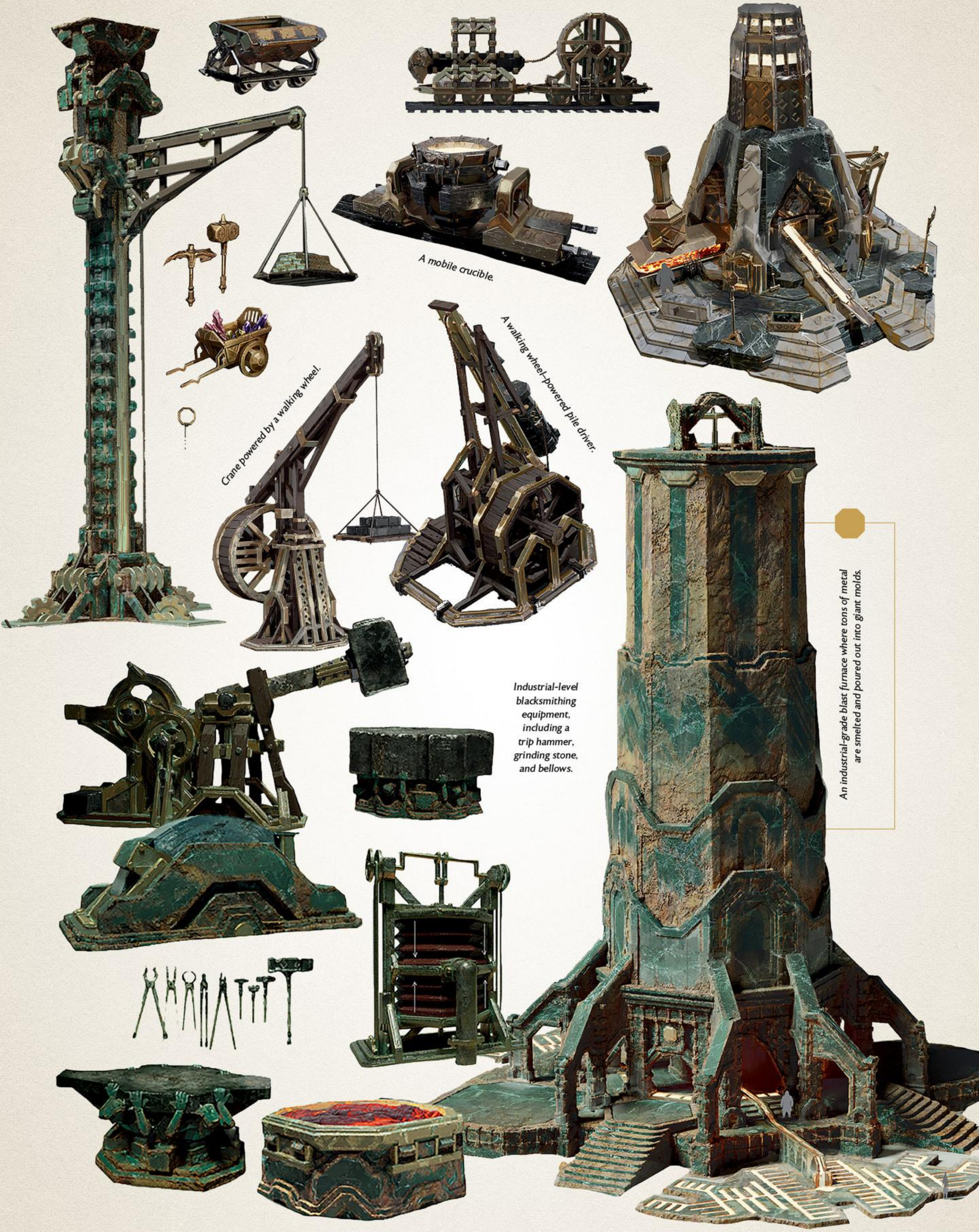
A tongue-in-cheek design for a dwarven mining suit.

Paragon sculptures celebrate prominent figures in every profession.



Bas-reliefs, sculptures, and signs all speak about what life was like in the Deep Roads before they were abandoned.





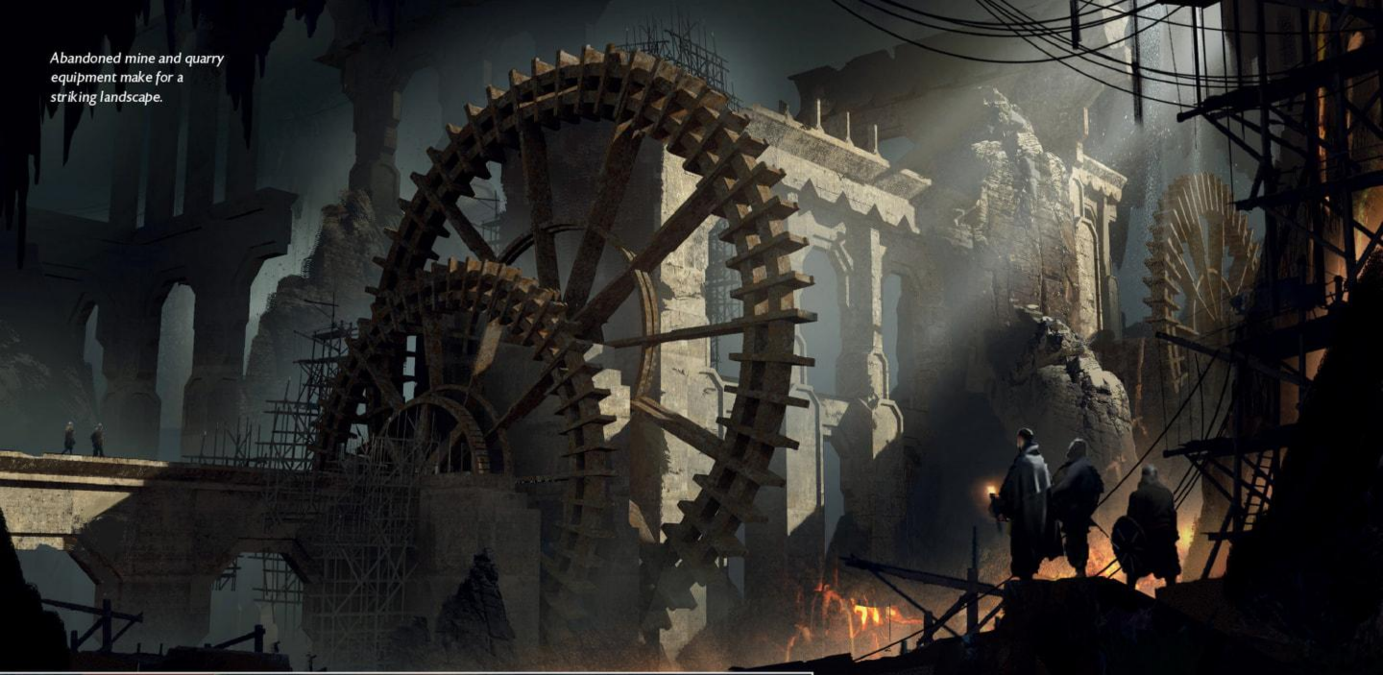
A mobile crucible.

Crane powered by a walking wheel.

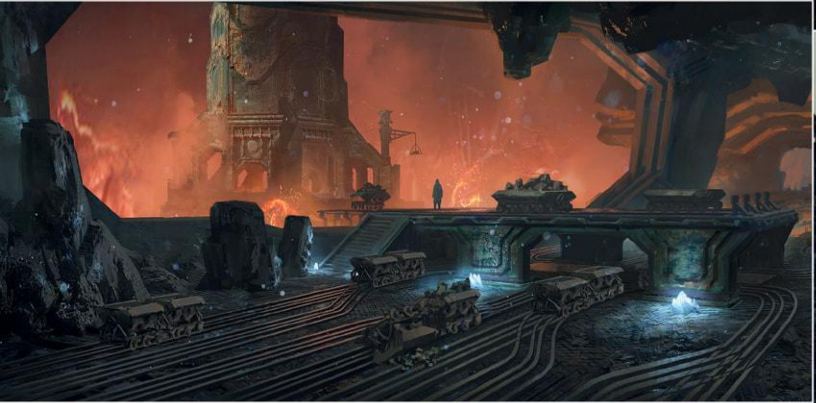
A walking wheel–powered pile driver.

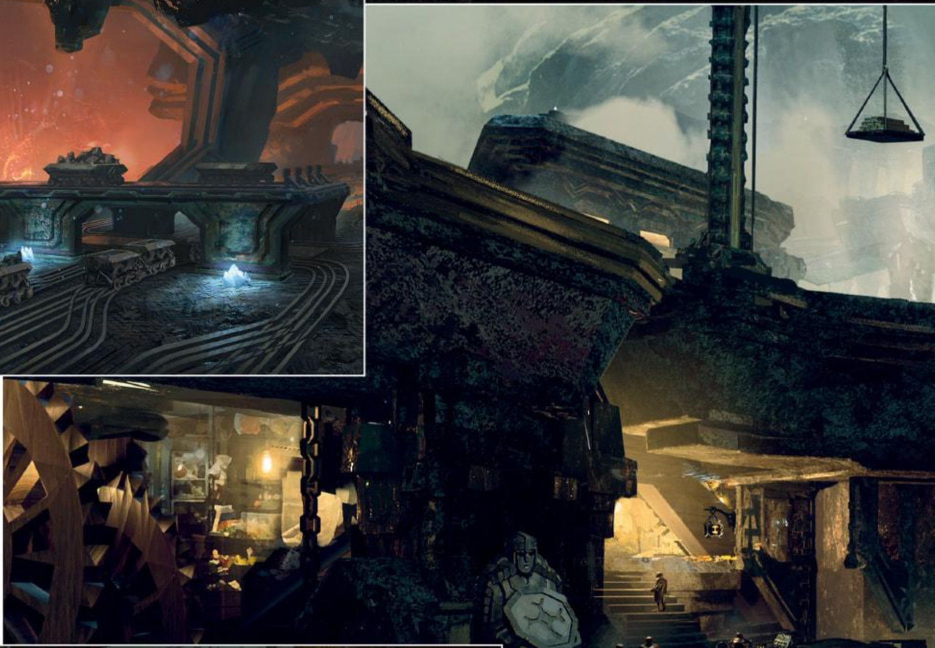
Industrial-level blacksmithing equipment, including a trip hammer, grinding stone, and bellows.

An industrial-grade blast furnace where tons of metal are smelted and poured out into giant molds.



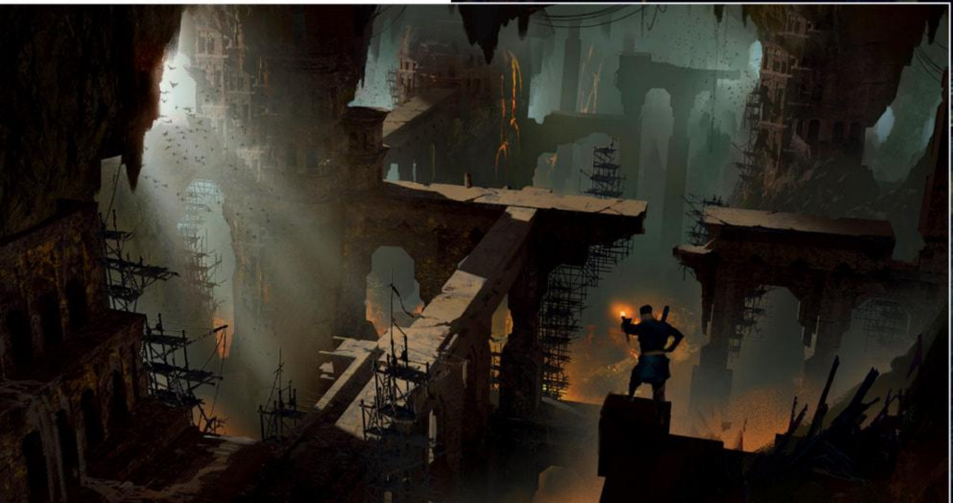
Abandoned mine and quarry equipment make for a striking landscape.

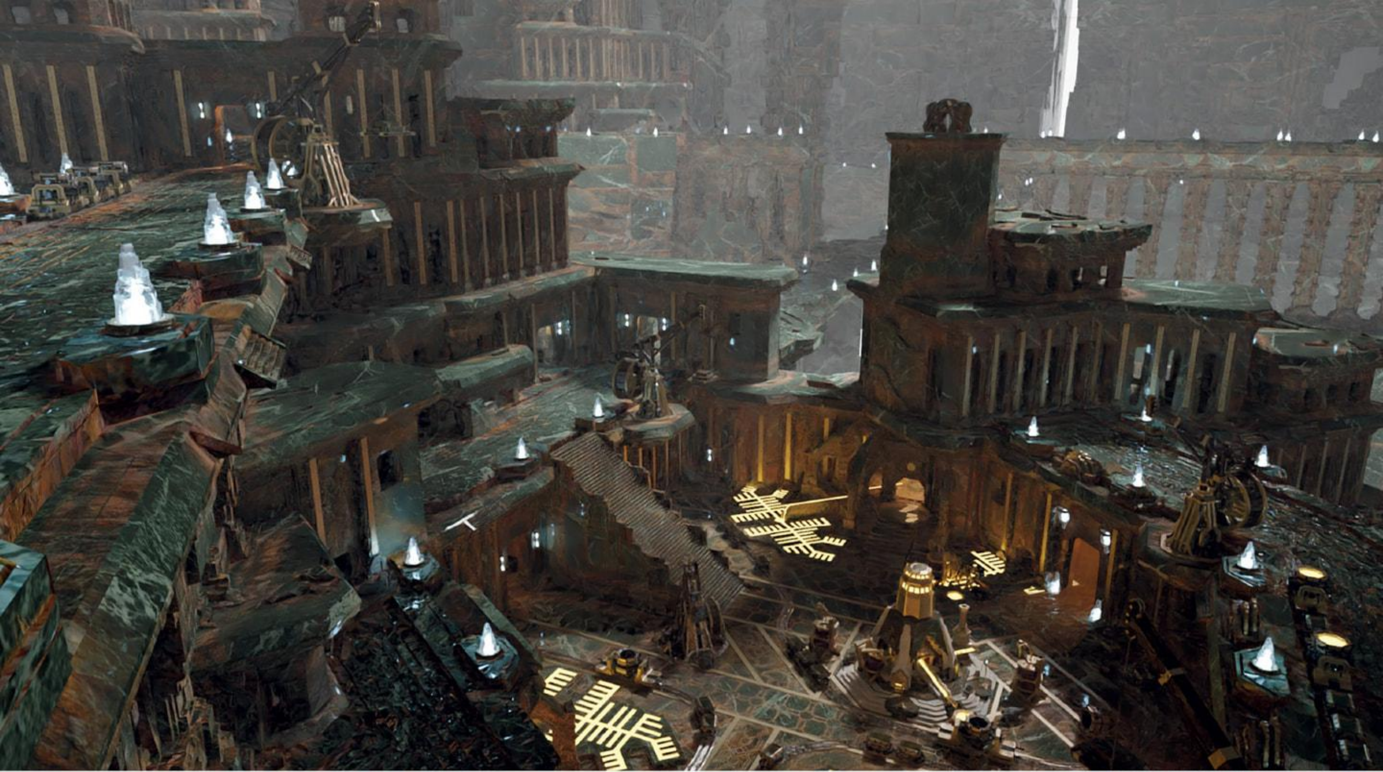


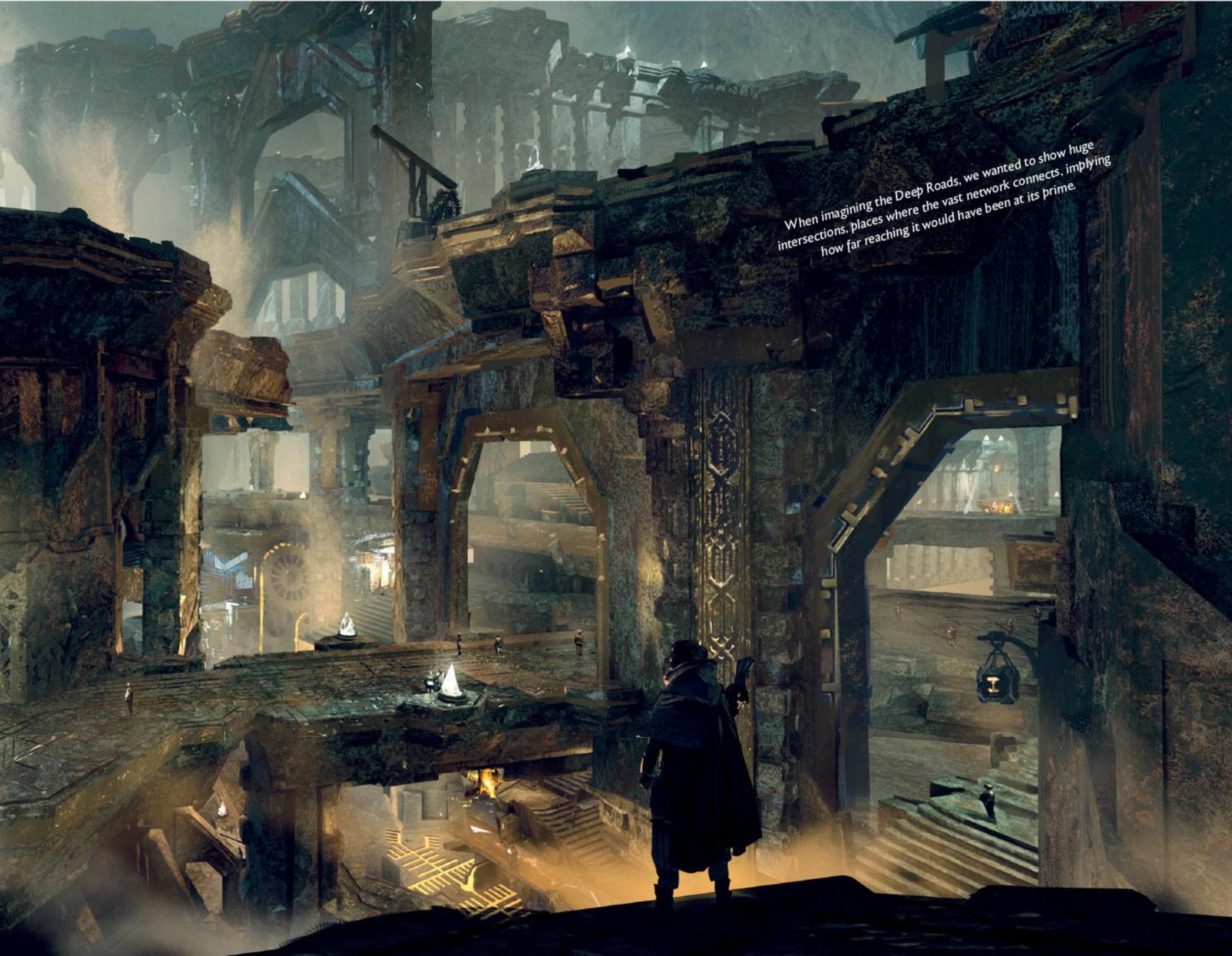


◆

The Deep Roads have been abandoned for a long time. A few attempts have been made to restore them, but then they're abandoned all over again.



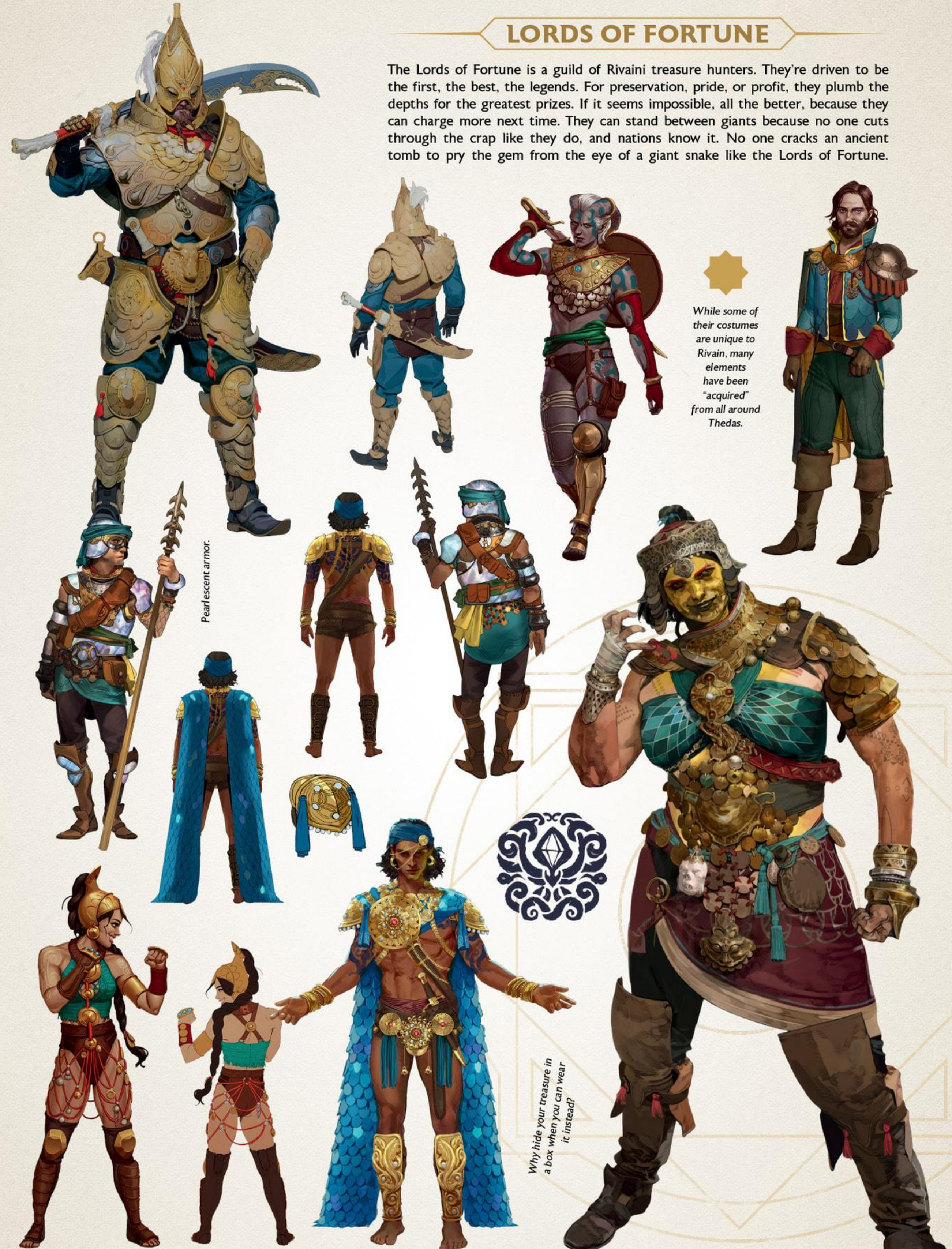




When imagining the Deep Roads, we wanted to show huge intersections, places where the vast network connects, implying how far reaching it would have been at its prime.

LORDS OF FORTUNE

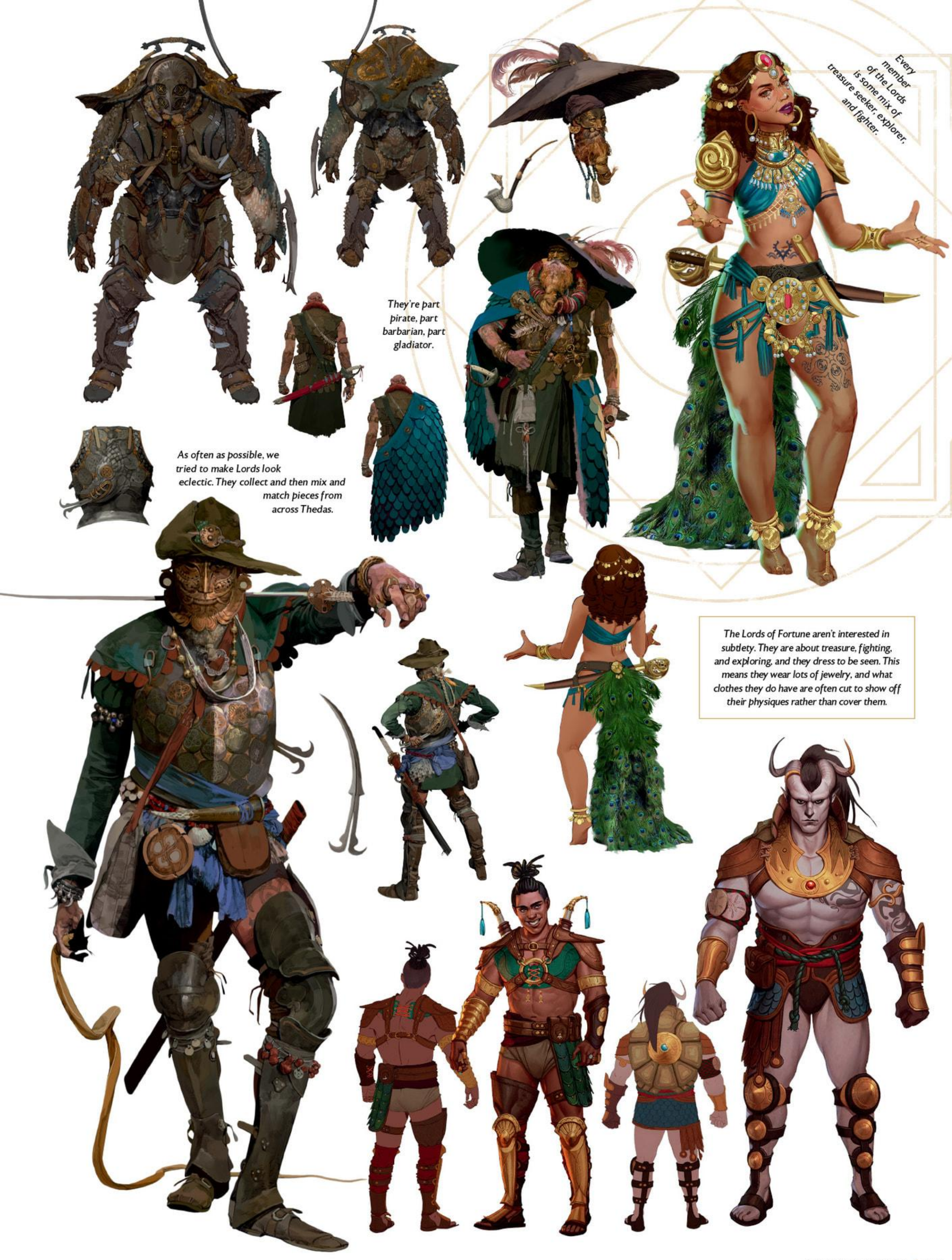
The Lords of Fortune is a guild of Rivaini treasure hunters. They're driven to be the first, the best, the legends. For preservation, pride, or profit, they plumb the depths for the greatest prizes. If it seems impossible, all the better, because they can charge more next time. They can stand between giants because no one cuts through the crap like they do, and nations know it. No one cracks an ancient tomb to pry the gem from the eye of a giant snake like the Lords of Fortune.



While some of their costumes are unique to Rivain, many elements have been "acquired" from all around Thedas.

Pearlescent armor.

Why hide your treasure in a box when you can wear it instead?



Every member of the Lords is some mix of treasure seeker, explorer, and fighter.

They're part pirate, part barbarian, part gladiator.

As often as possible, we tried to make Lords look eclectic. They collect and then mix and match pieces from across Thedas.

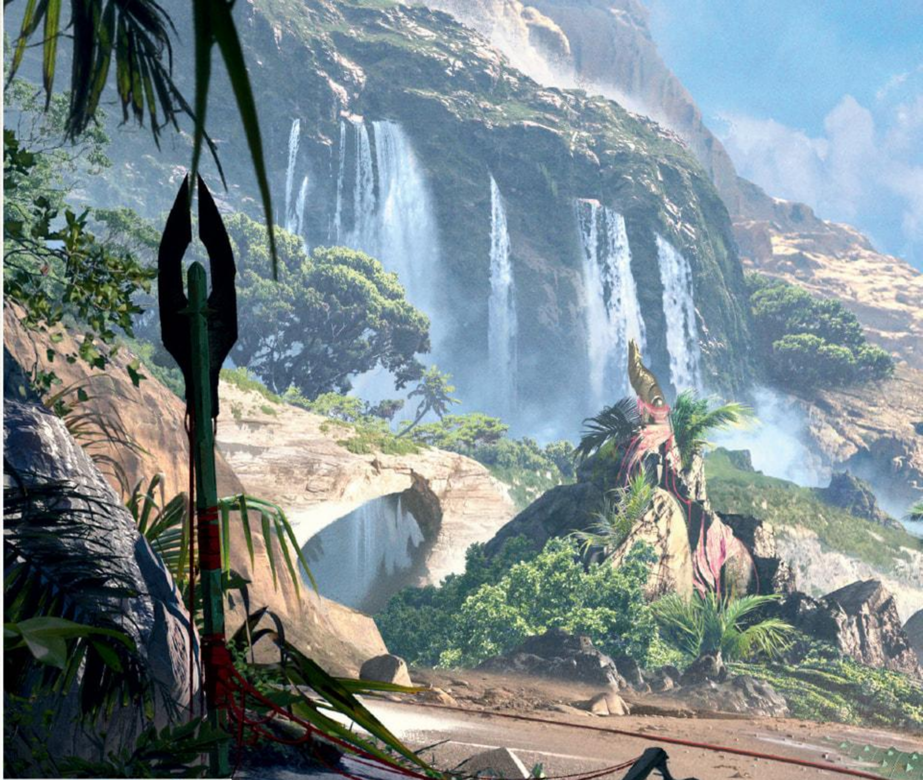
The Lords of Fortune aren't interested in subtlety. They are about treasure, fighting, and exploring, and they dress to be seen. This means they wear lots of jewelry, and what clothes they do have are often cut to show off their physiques rather than cover them.

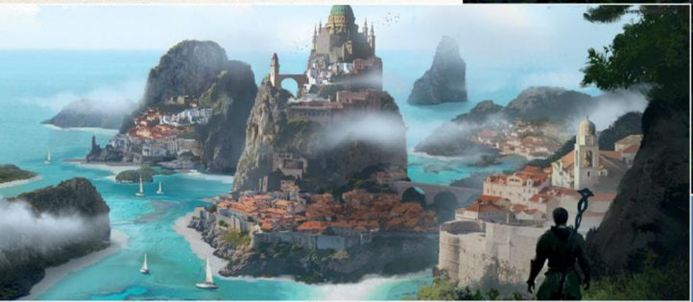
RIVAIN

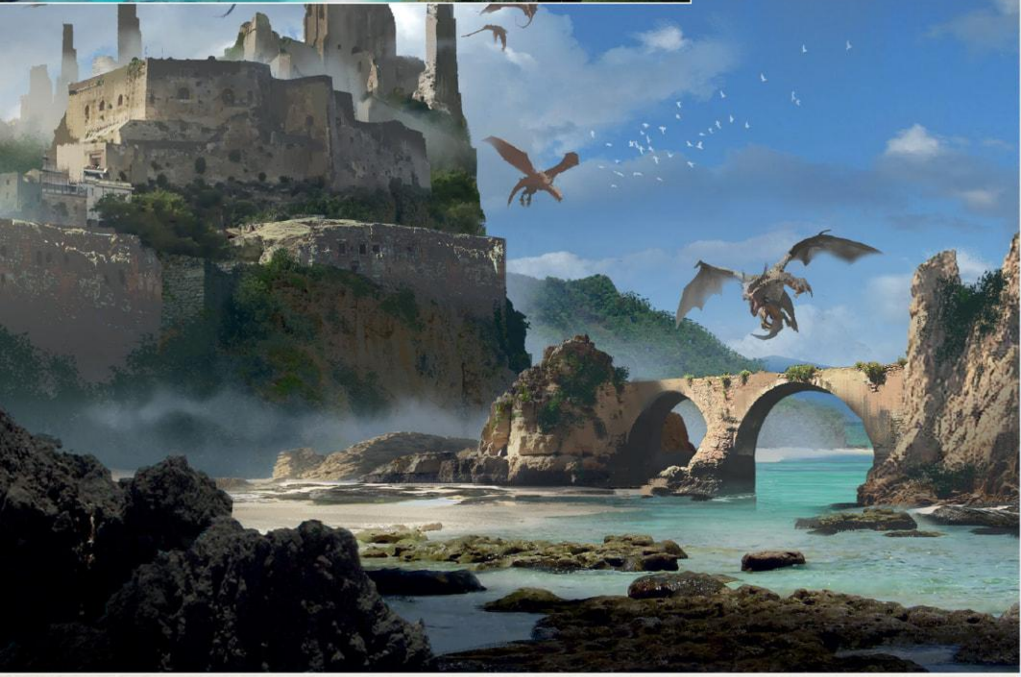
Castaways making new lives. The majority are human, descended from Tevinters and their longstanding trading partners. There are ethnicities here who don't seem to match the currently documented list of nations, hinting at shores not visited in living memory, and there are also Qunari. Some fleeing the Qun. Some not fleeing, but reinterpreting. There is a sizable Qunari community, and it is finding converts and alarming both Tevinter and the Qunari triumvirate. Rivain is a mix of outcast people making something new.

Life beneath Rivain is just as varied. Banners of conquerors over buildings touched by many cultures, smuggler tunnels, Tevinter public works, the bones of conquered cities and even deeper infrastructure, elven ruins, deep roads, and deeper roads.

Rivain was a great palate cleanser between dense urban regions, midnight swamps, and vast caverns.

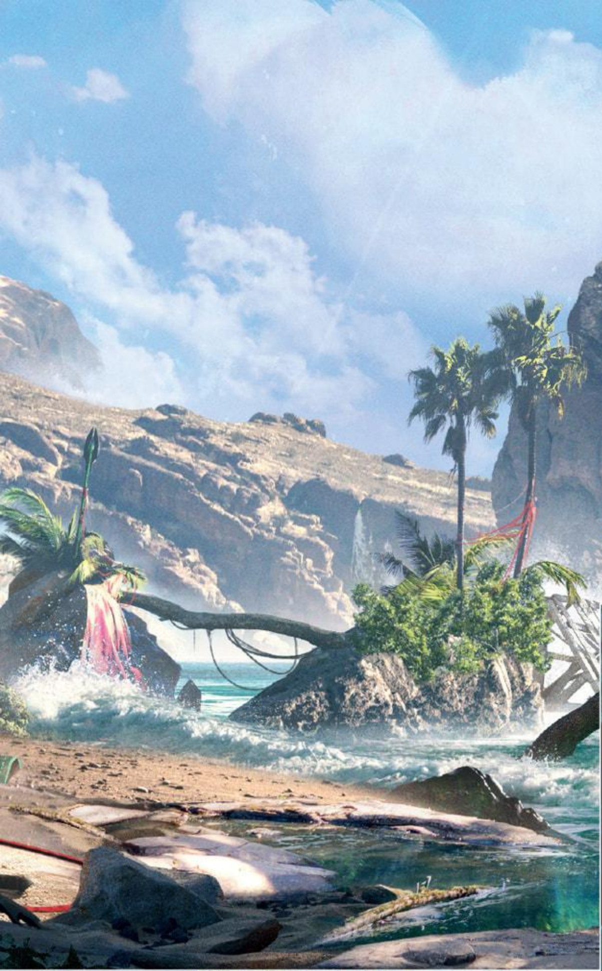


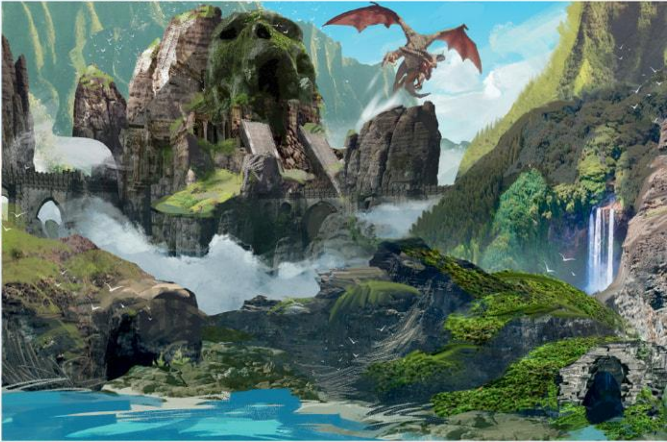


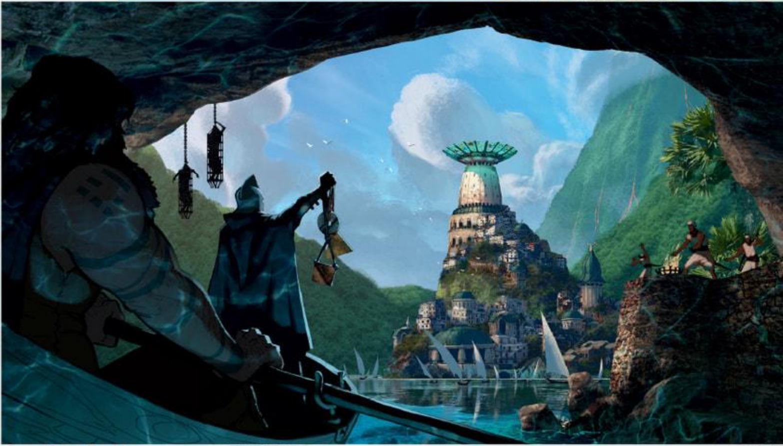


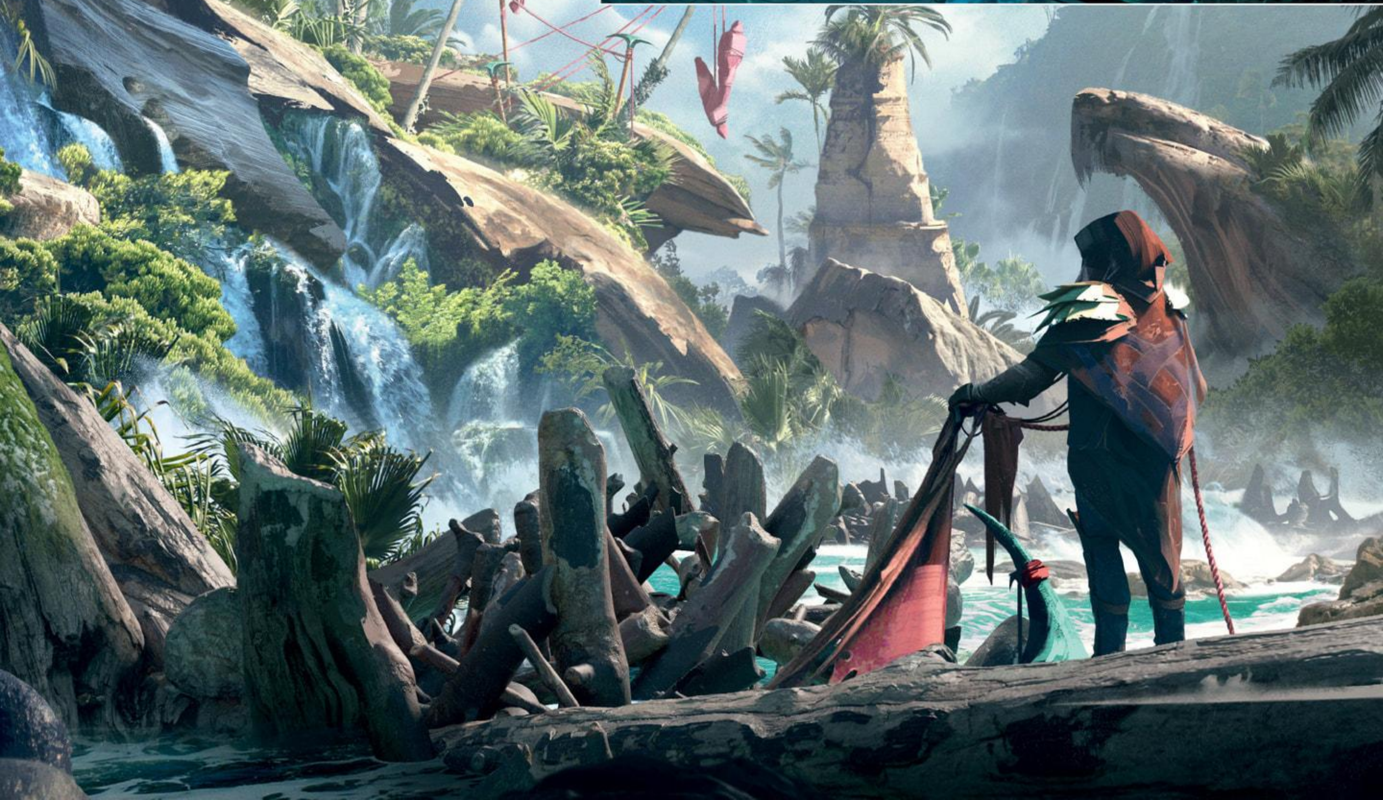
It may be beautiful, but it's no less dangerous to navigate.

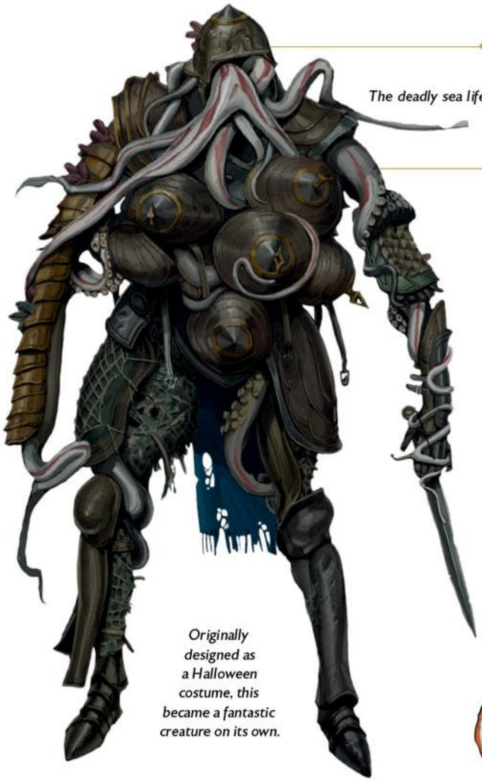
From the earliest sketches, we wanted a land of tropical colors, infested with dragons.





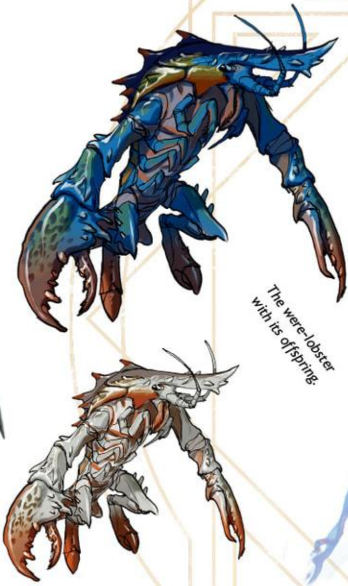




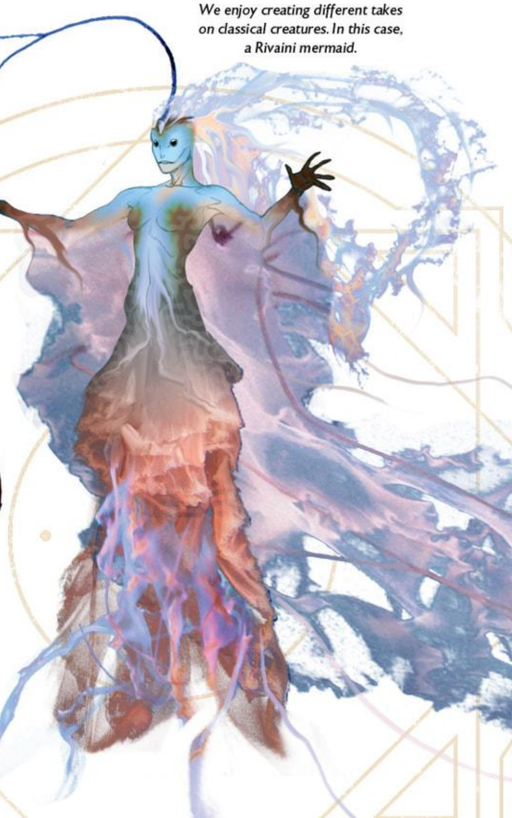


The deadly sea life of Rivain was designed to be beautiful or intriguing but also able to get up close to you on dry land.

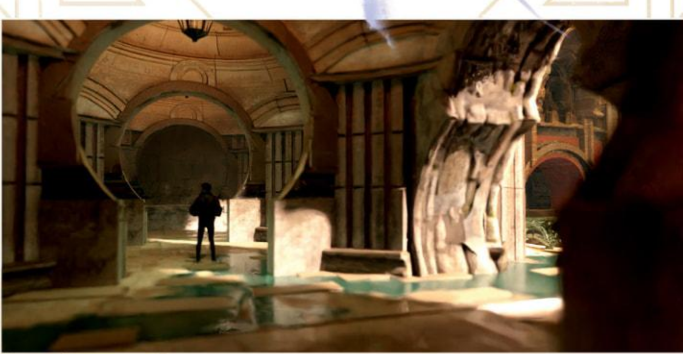
Originally designed as a Halloween costume, this became a fantastic creature on its own.

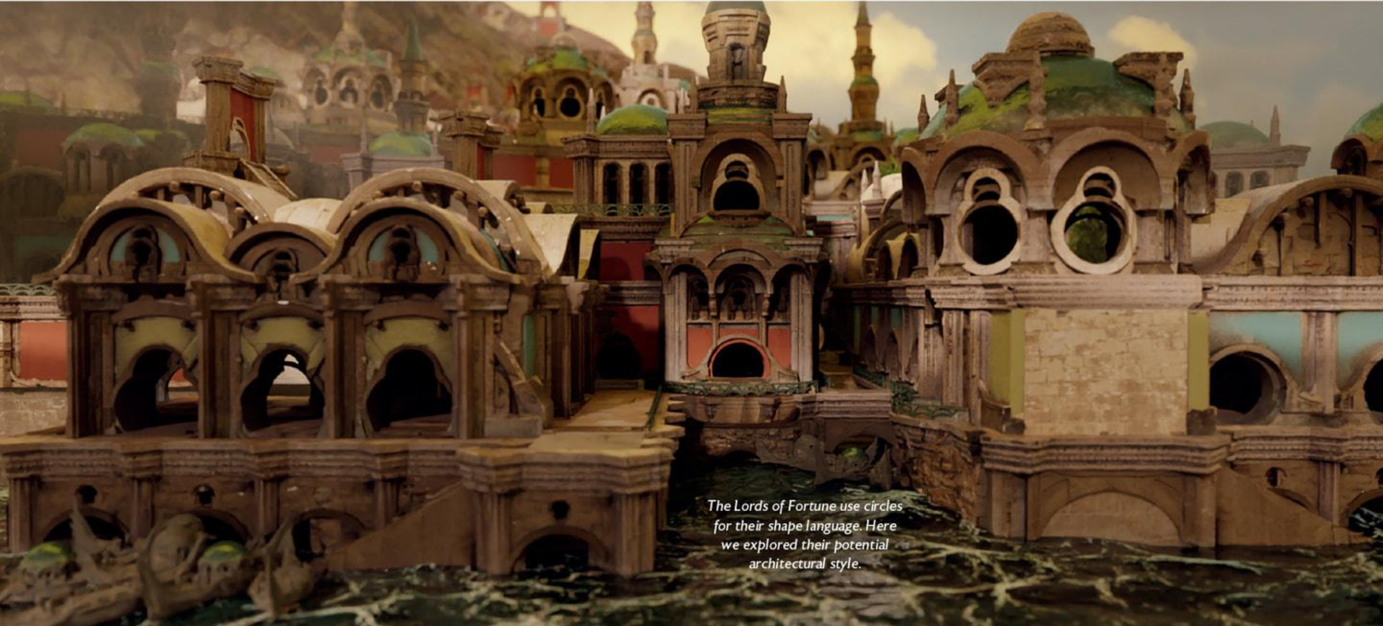


The were-lobster with its offspring.

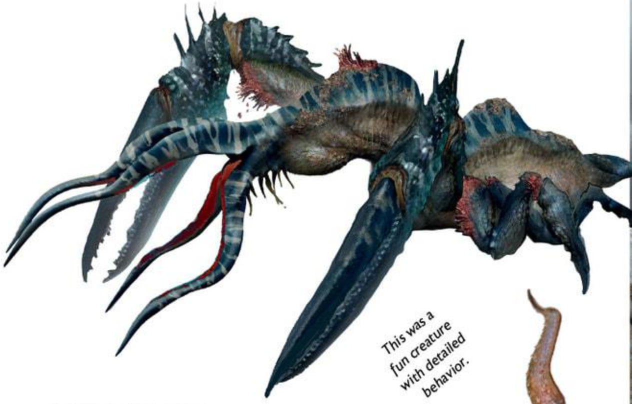


We enjoy creating different takes on classical creatures. In this case, a Rivaini mermaid.

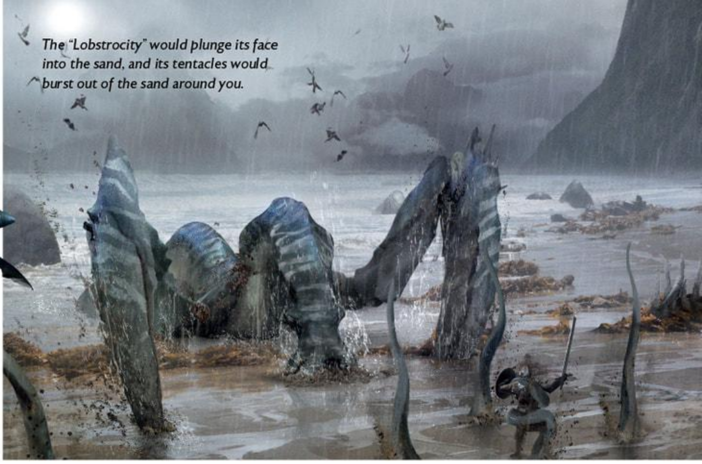




The Lords of Fortune use circles for their shape language. Here we explored their potential architectural style.

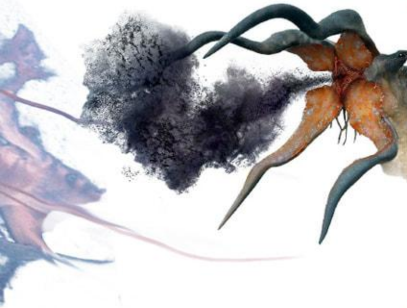


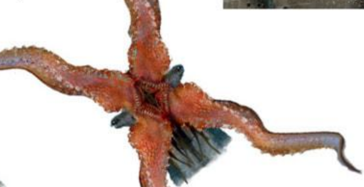
This was a fun creature with detailed behavior.

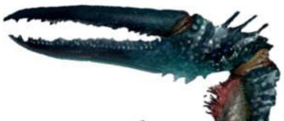


The "Lobstrocity" would plunge its face into the sand, and its tentacles would burst out of the sand around you.

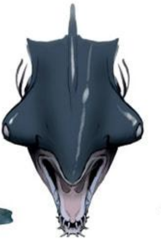
Spitting an inky diversion.

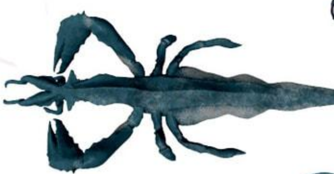


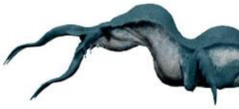




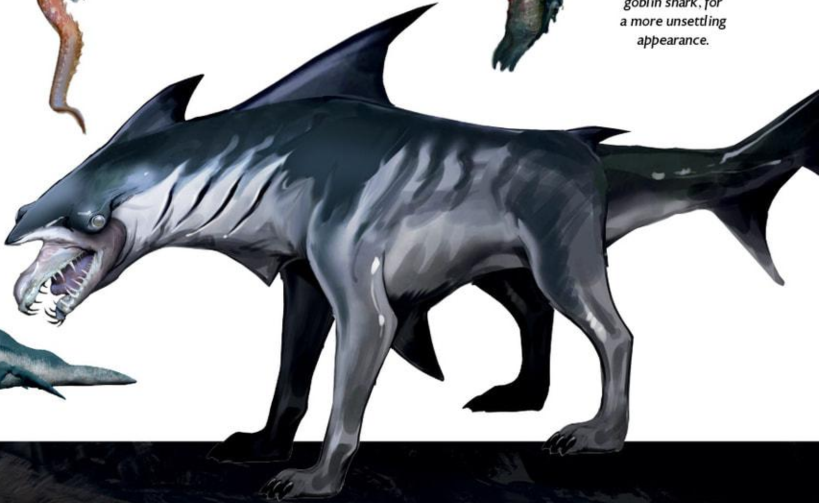
A simple land shark. This version is based on a goblin shark, for a more unsettling appearance.

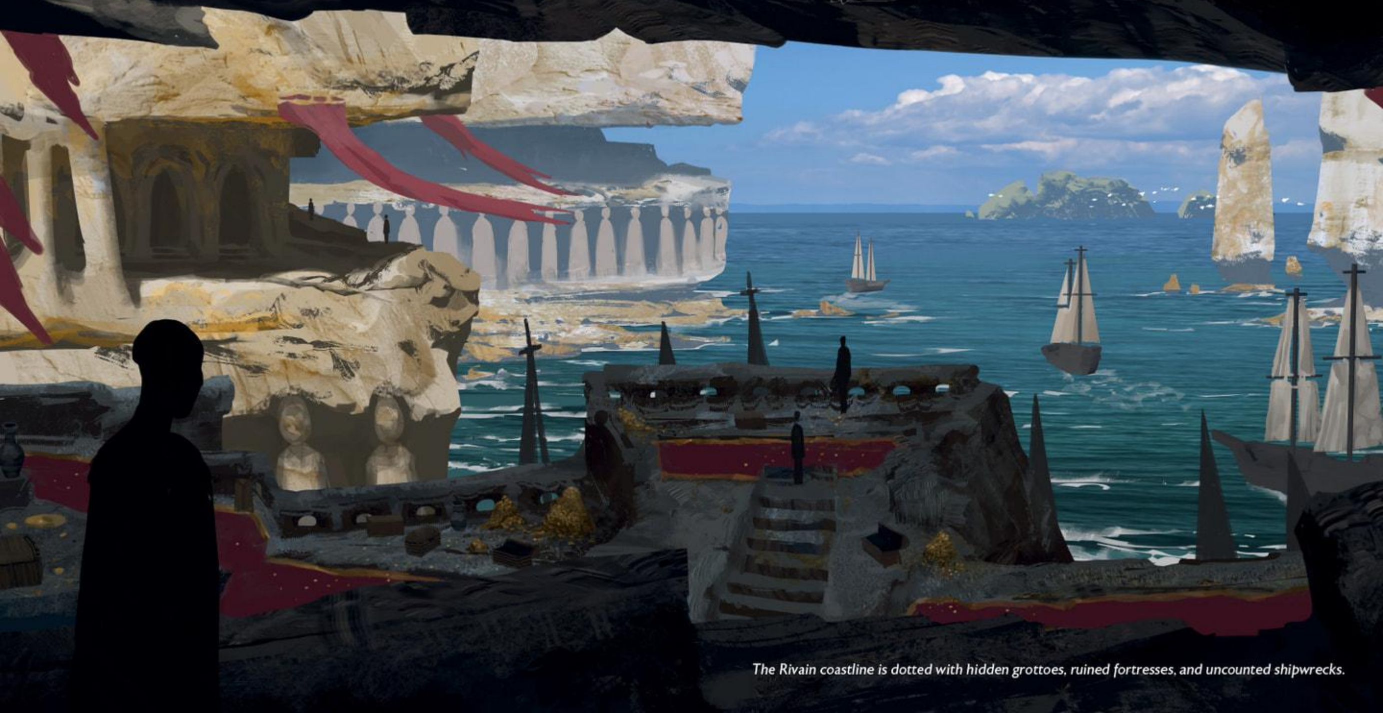






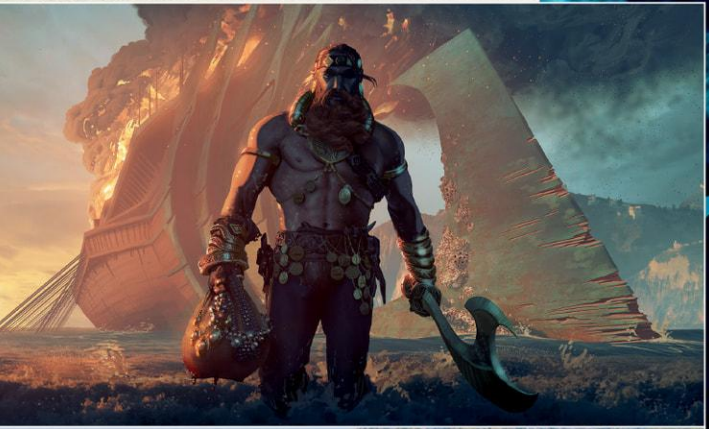
Figuring out the anatomical details of this bizarre creature.

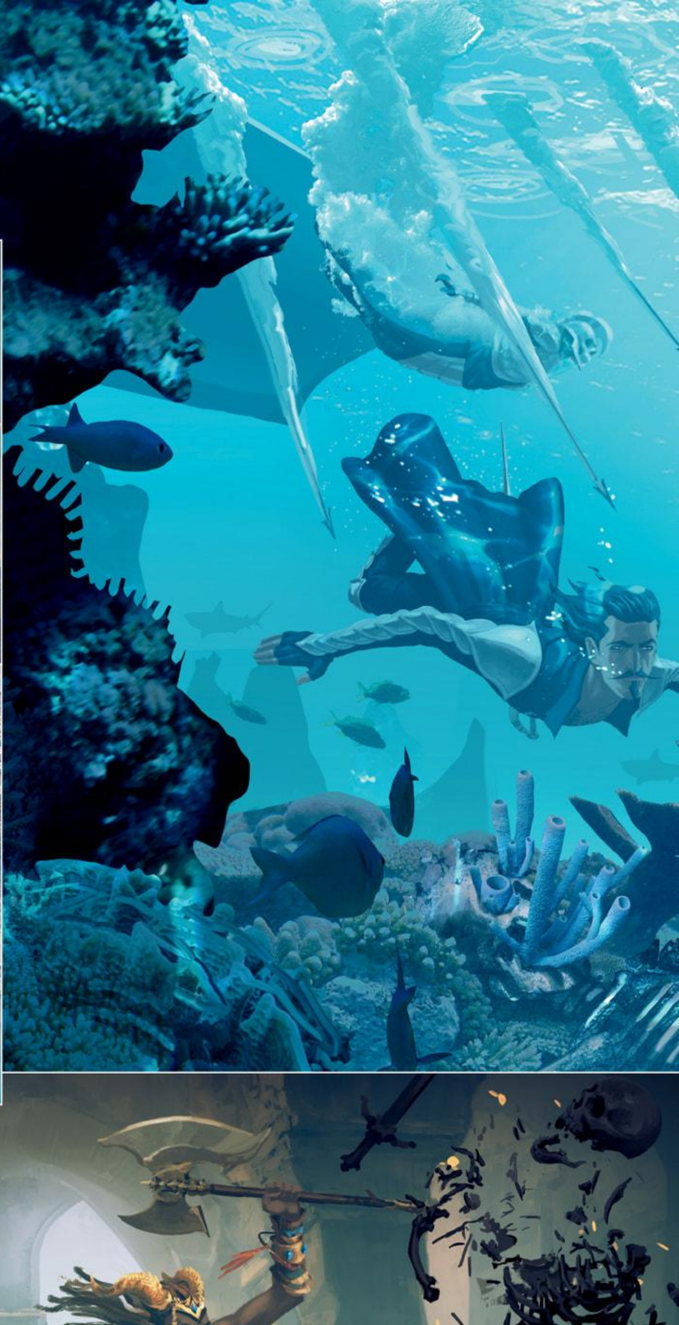


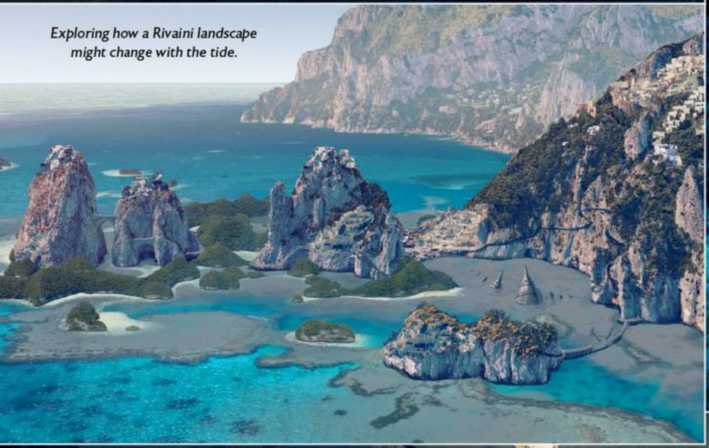


The Rivain coastline is dotted with hidden grottoes, ruined fortresses, and uncounted shipwrecks.

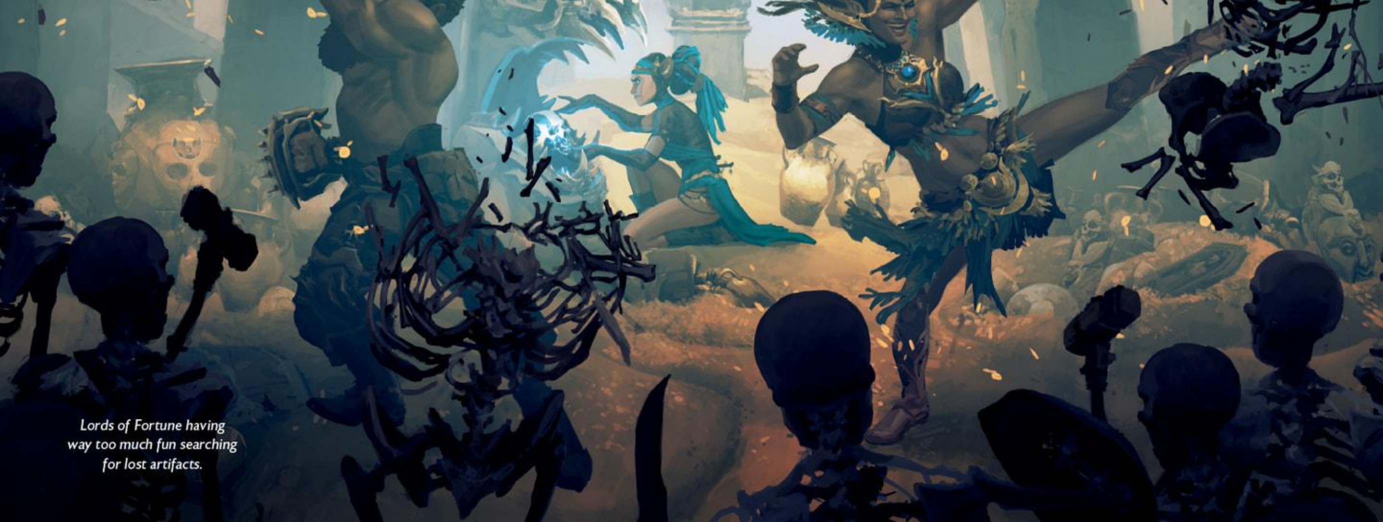
Beat boards like these help us explore the look and feel of a group in their context. How do they act? What kinds of settings do we find them in? How do they problem-solve?



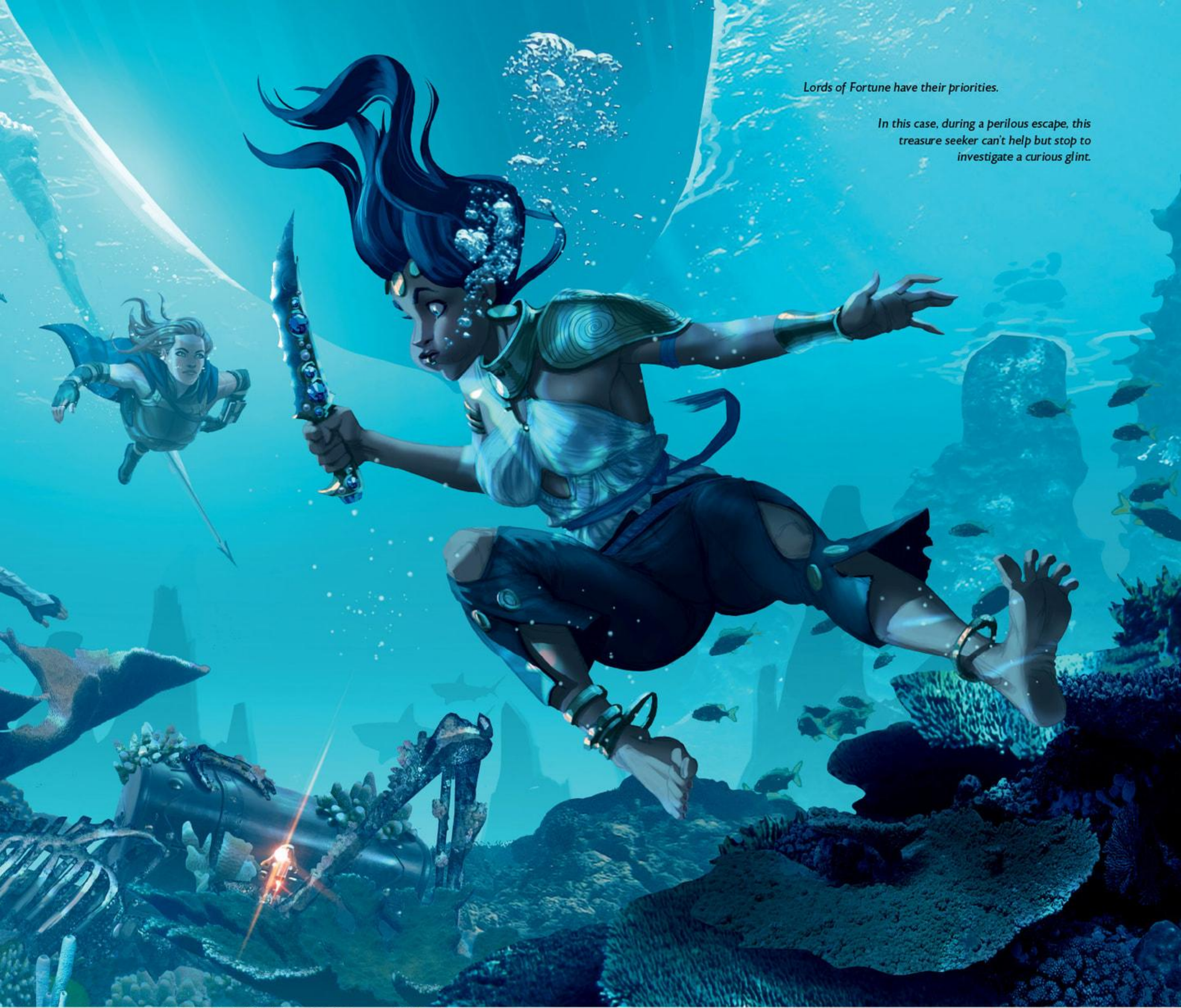




Exploring how a Rivaini landscape might change with the tide.

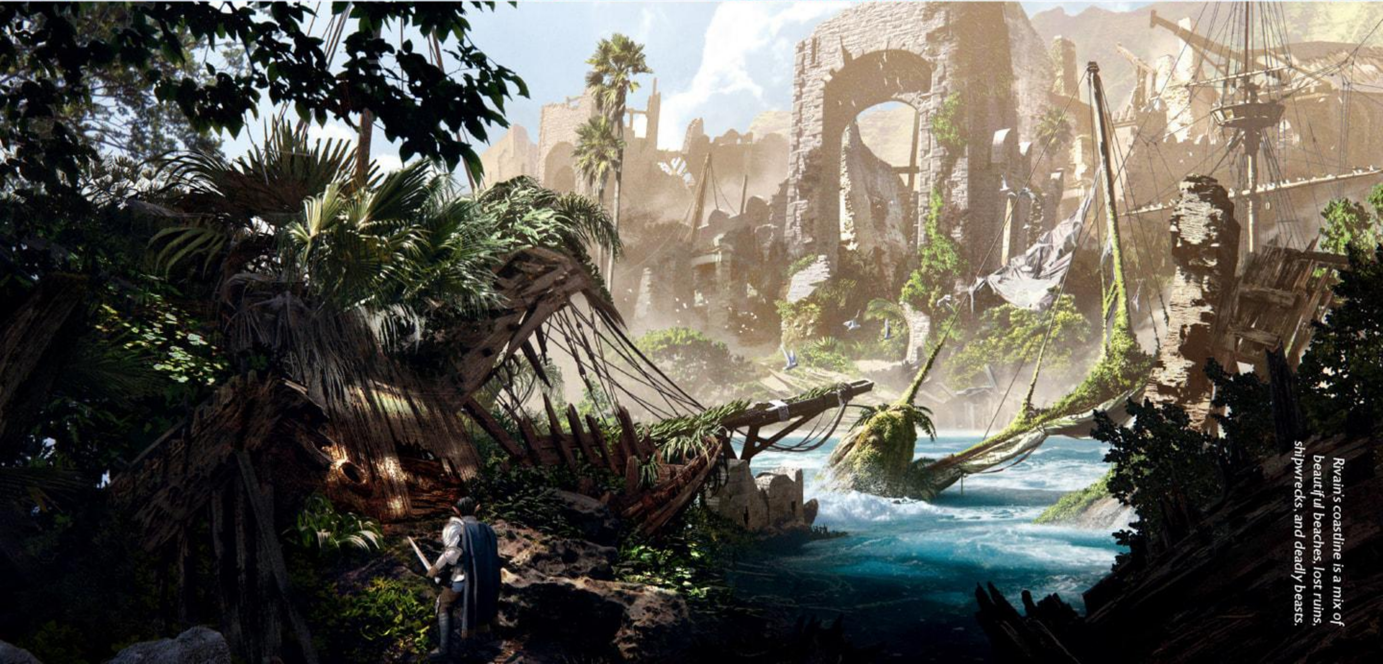


Lords of Fortune having way too much fun searching for lost artifacts.



Lords of Fortune have their priorities.

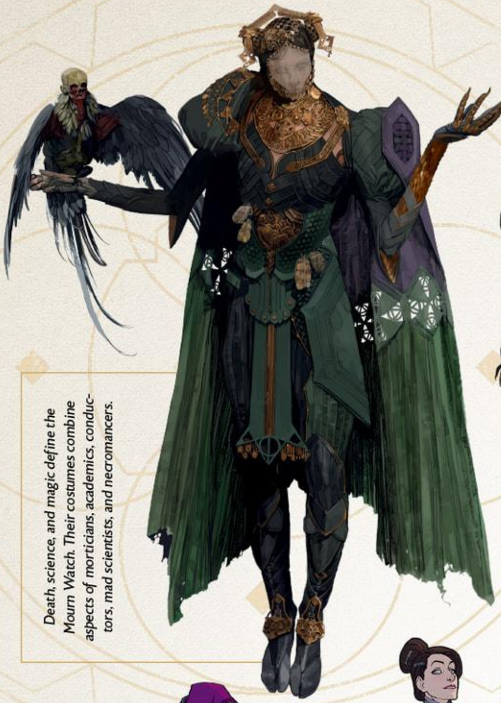
In this case, during a perilous escape, this treasure seeker can't help but stop to investigate a curious glint.



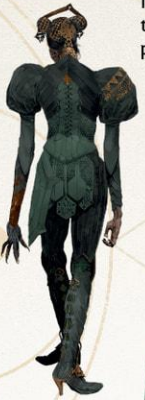
Rivain's coastline is a mix of beautiful beaches, lost ruins, shipwrecks, and deadly beasts.

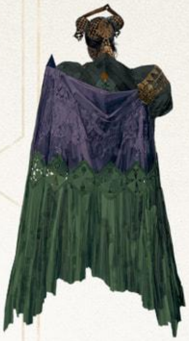
MOURN WATCH

The Mourn Watch are masters of undeath, necromancy, curses, and other dark magic. They probe at the borders of "known" magic, where laws fall away and vaster forces creep through. The Watchers know there's more than just spirits in the Fade. If you work with them, prepare for the boundaries between life, death, and reality to get thin.

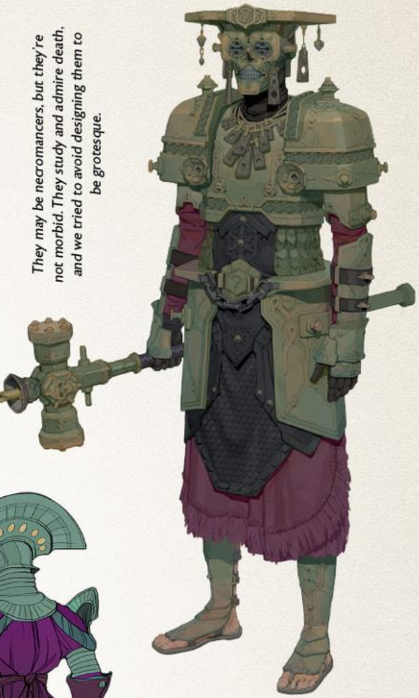


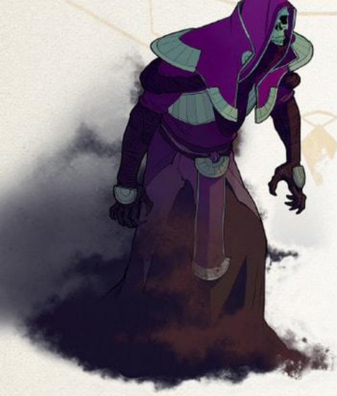
Death, science, and magic define the Mourn Watch. Their costumes combine aspects of morticians, academics, conductors, mad scientists, and necromancers.

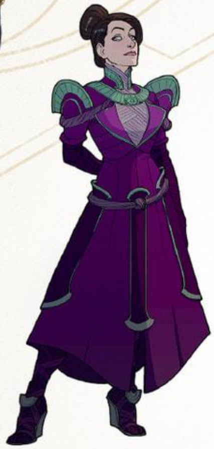


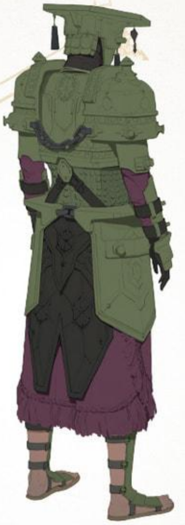


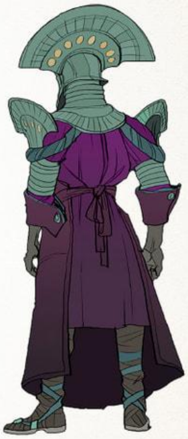
They may be necromancers, but they're not morbid. They study and admire death, and we tried to avoid designing them to be grotesque.





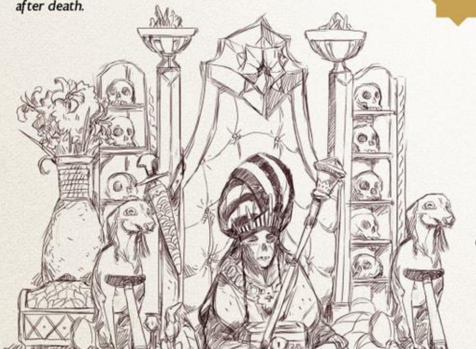


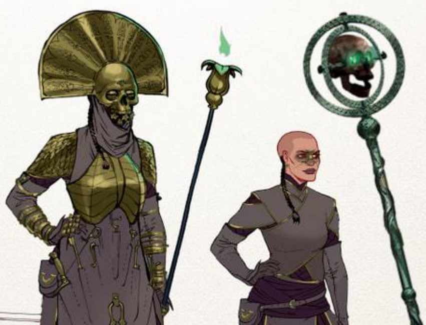


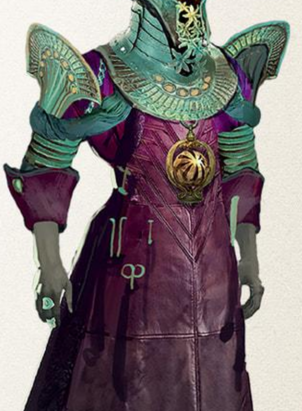


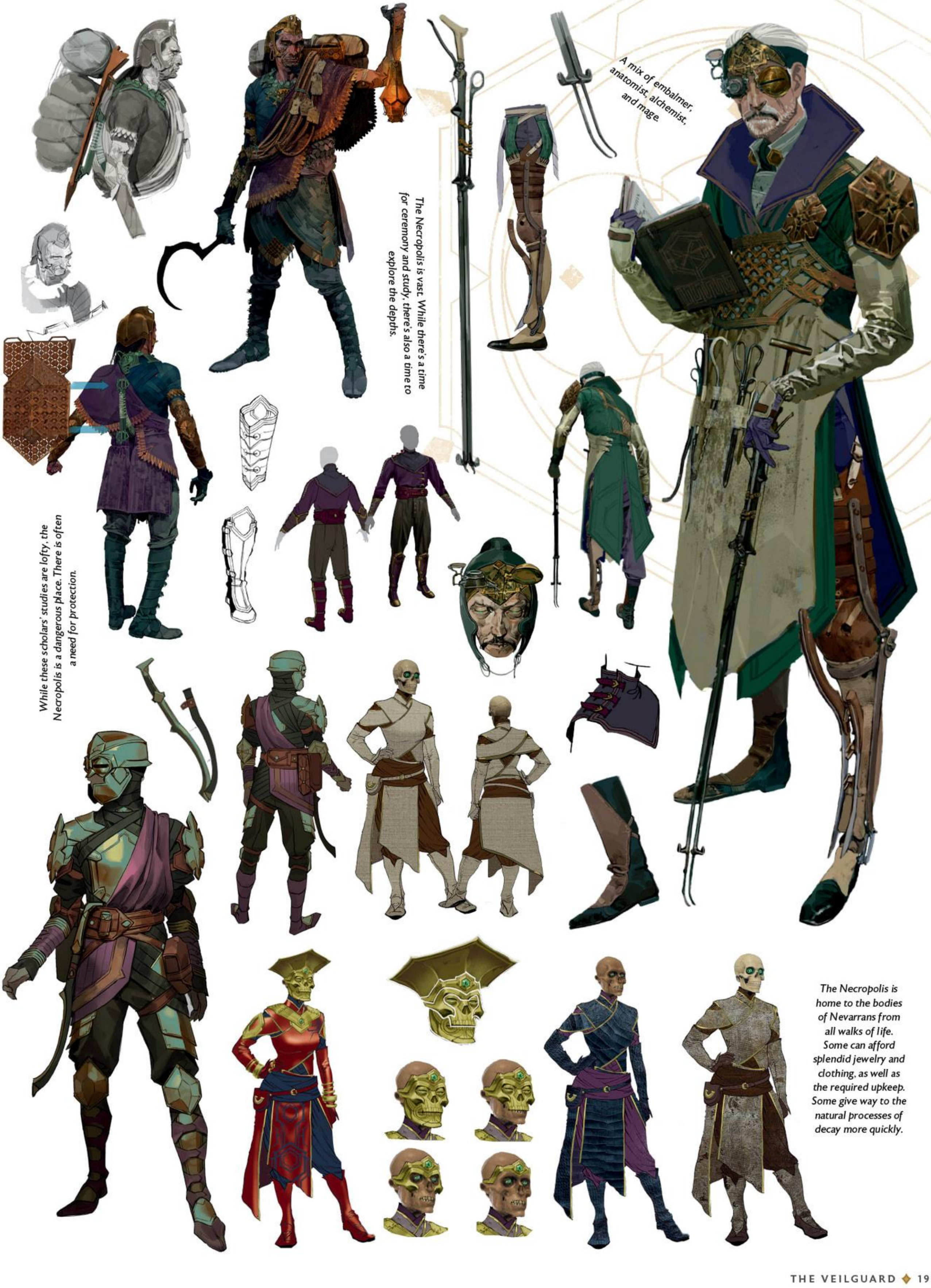
Some armor is built more for ceremony than for practical day-to-day duties.

An undead diorama. Wealthy nobles invest heavily in their life after death.







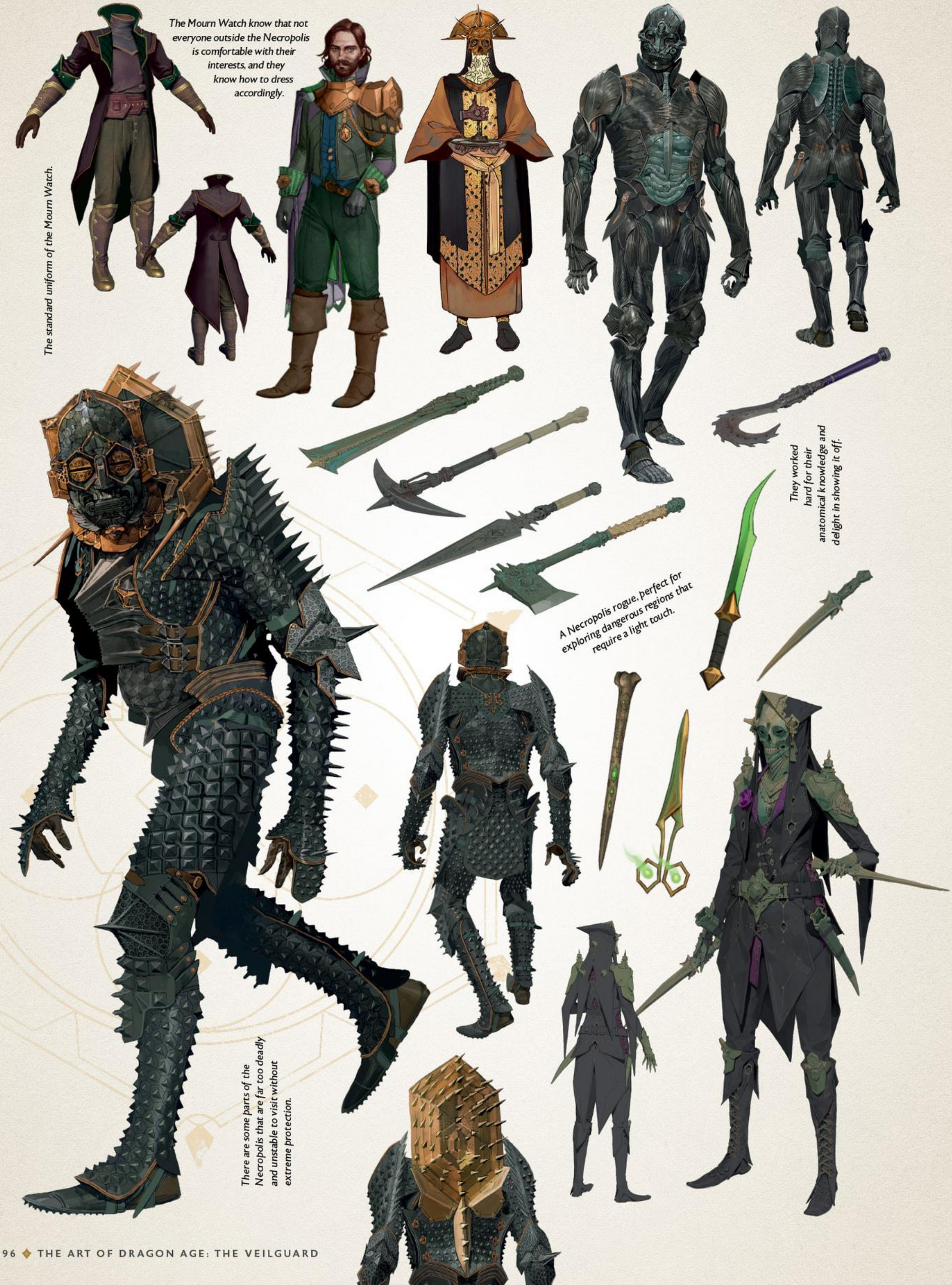


A mix of embalmer, anatomist, alchemist, and mage.

The Necropolis is vast. While there's a time for ceremony and study, there's also a time to explore the depths.

While these scholars' studies are lofty, the Necropolis is a dangerous place. There is often a need for protection.

The Necropolis is home to the bodies of Nevarrans from all walks of life. Some can afford splendid jewelry and clothing, as well as the required upkeep. Some give way to the natural processes of decay more quickly.



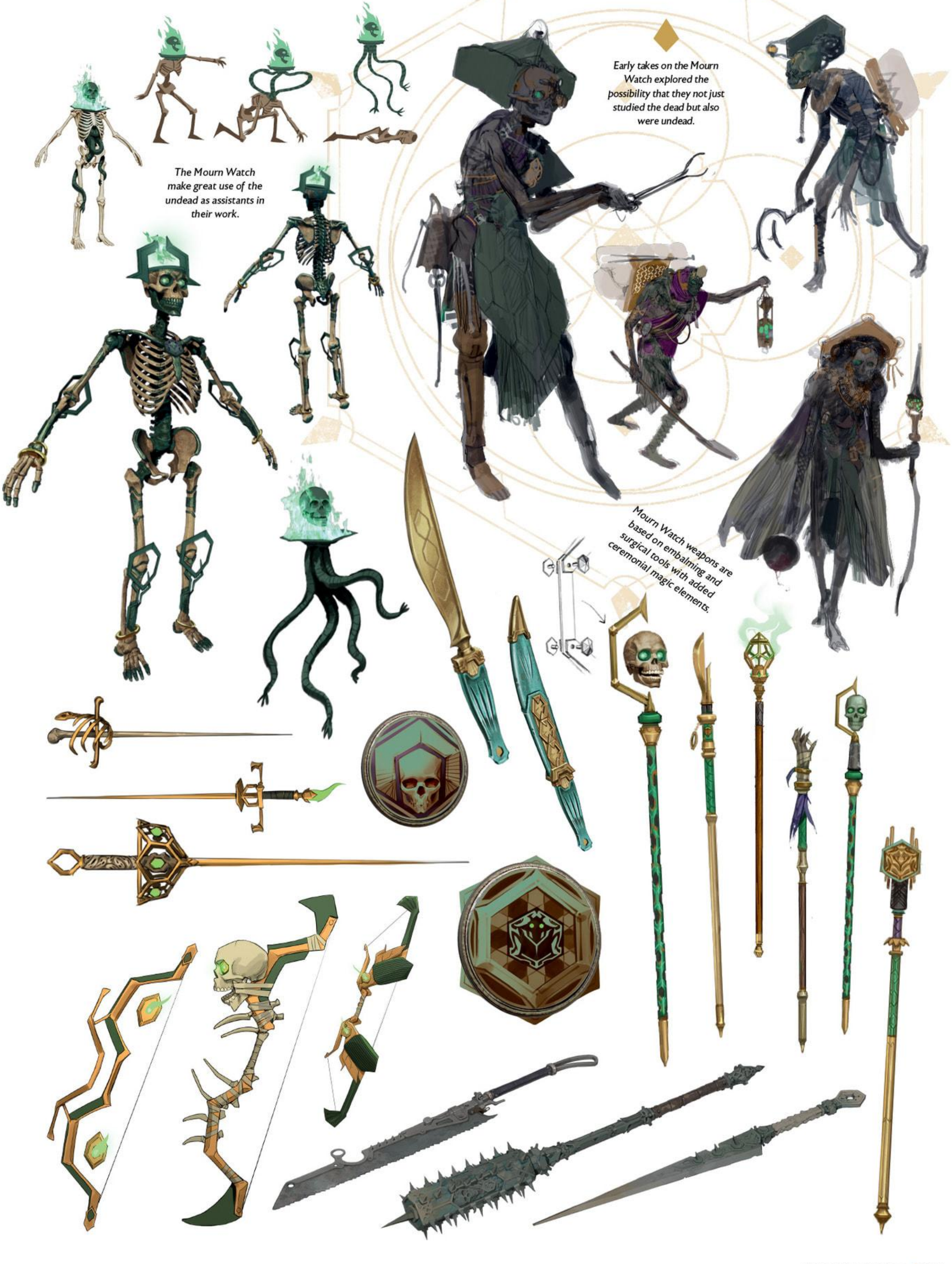
The Mourn Watch know that not everyone outside the Necropolis is comfortable with their interests, and they know how to dress accordingly.

The standard uniform of the Mourn Watch.

They worked hard for their anatomical knowledge and delight in showing it off.

A Necropolis rogue, perfect for exploring dangerous regions that require a light touch.

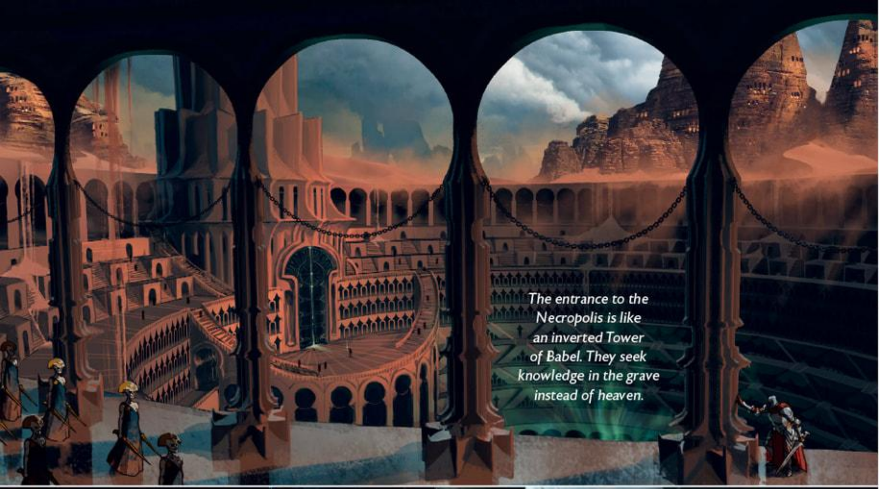
There are some parts of the Necropolis that are far too deadly and unstable to visit without extreme protection.



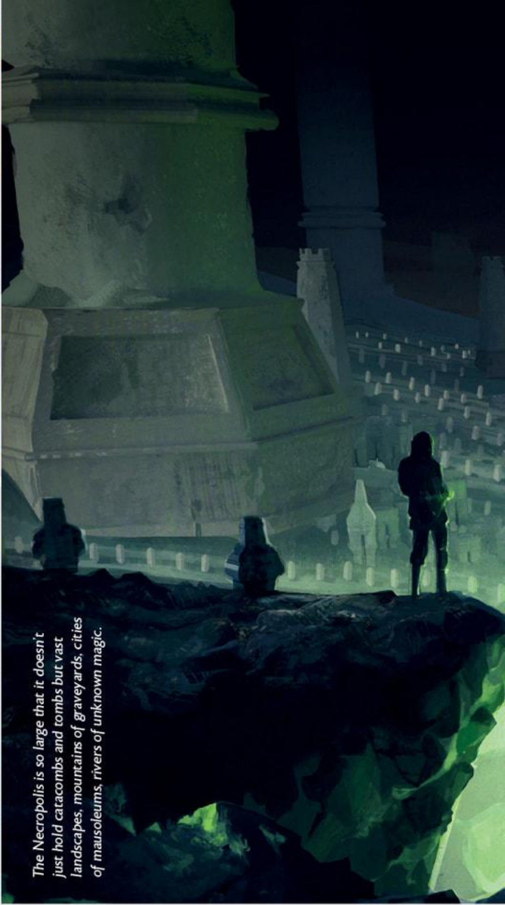
The Mourn Watch make great use of the undead as assistants in their work.

Early takes on the Mourn Watch explored the possibility that they not just studied the dead but also were undead.

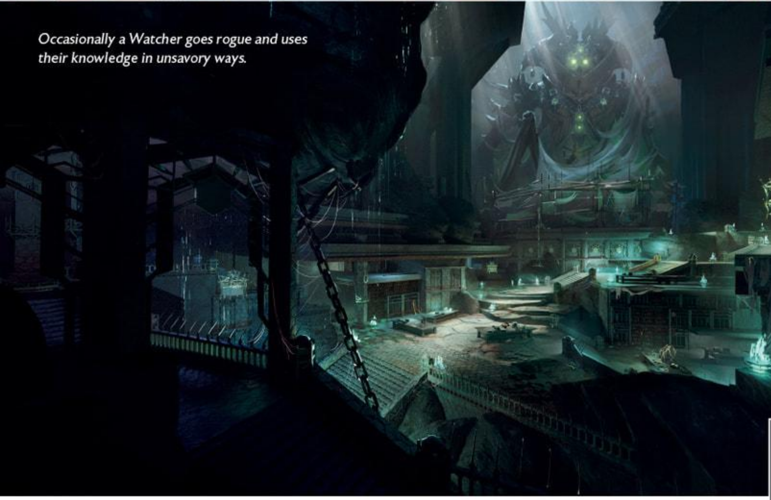
Mourn Watch weapons are based on embalming and surgical tools with added ceremonial magic elements.



The entrance to the Necropolis is like an inverted Tower of Babel. They seek knowledge in the grave instead of heaven.



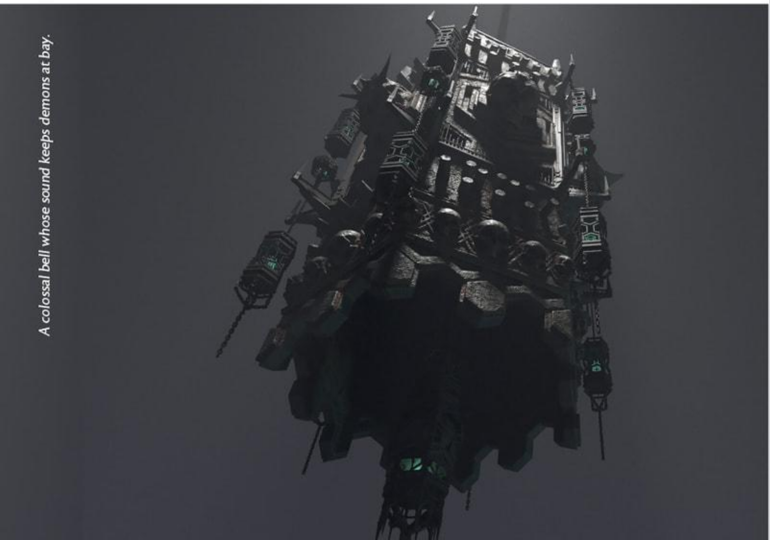
The Necropolis is so large that it doesn't just hold catacombs and tombs but vast landscapes, mountains of graveyards, cities of mausoleums, rivers of unknown magic.



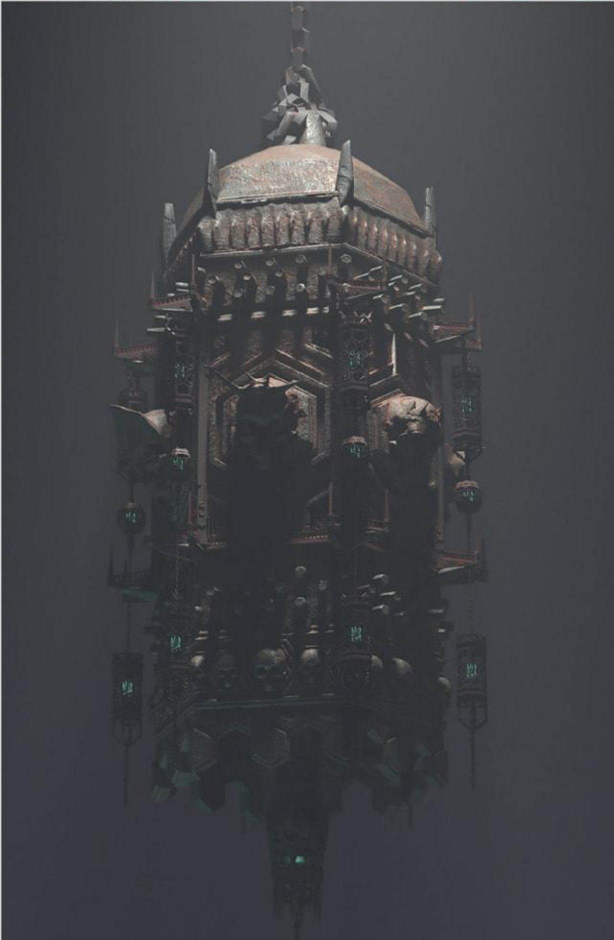
Occasionally a Watcher goes rogue and uses their knowledge in unsavory ways.

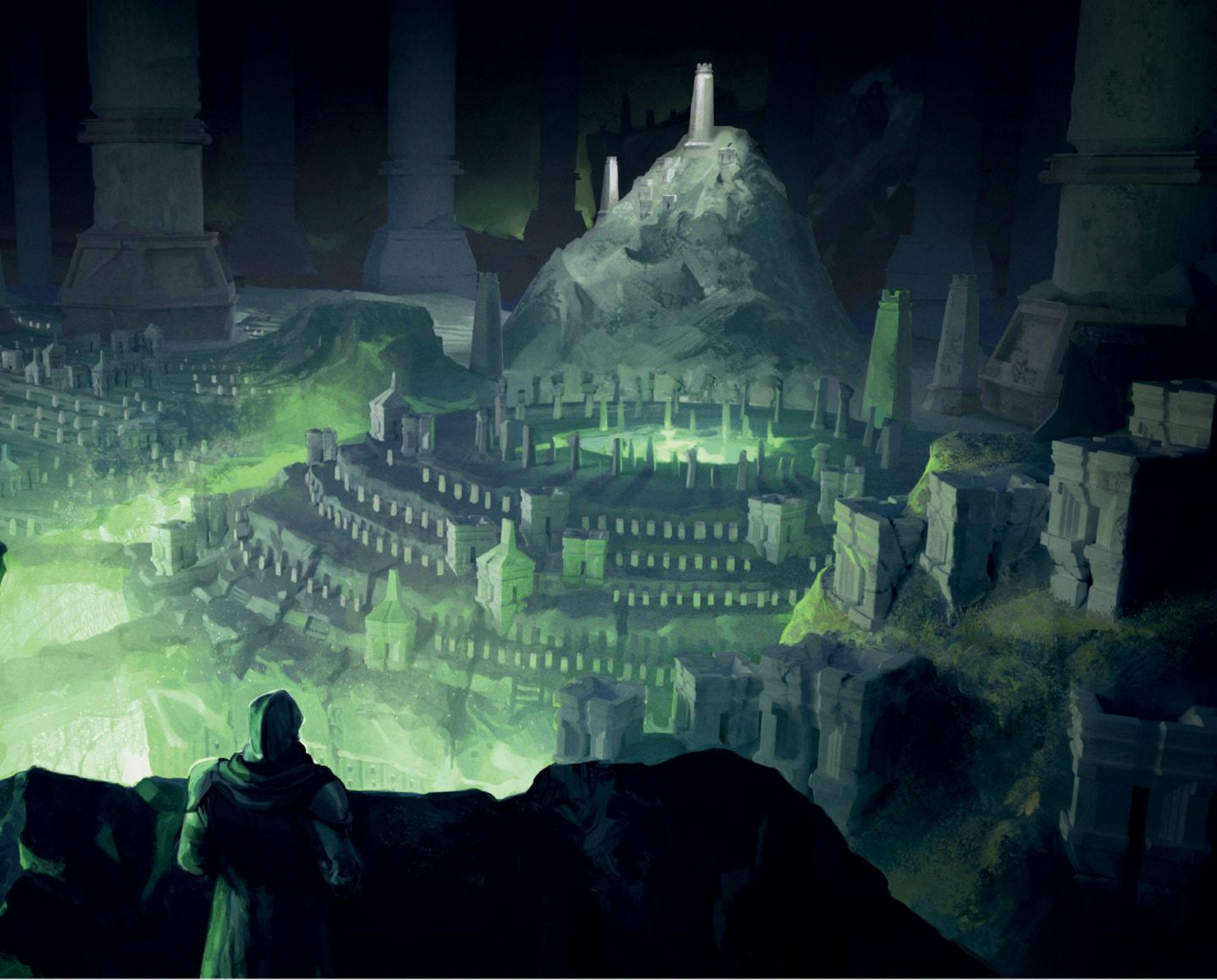
NECROPOLIS

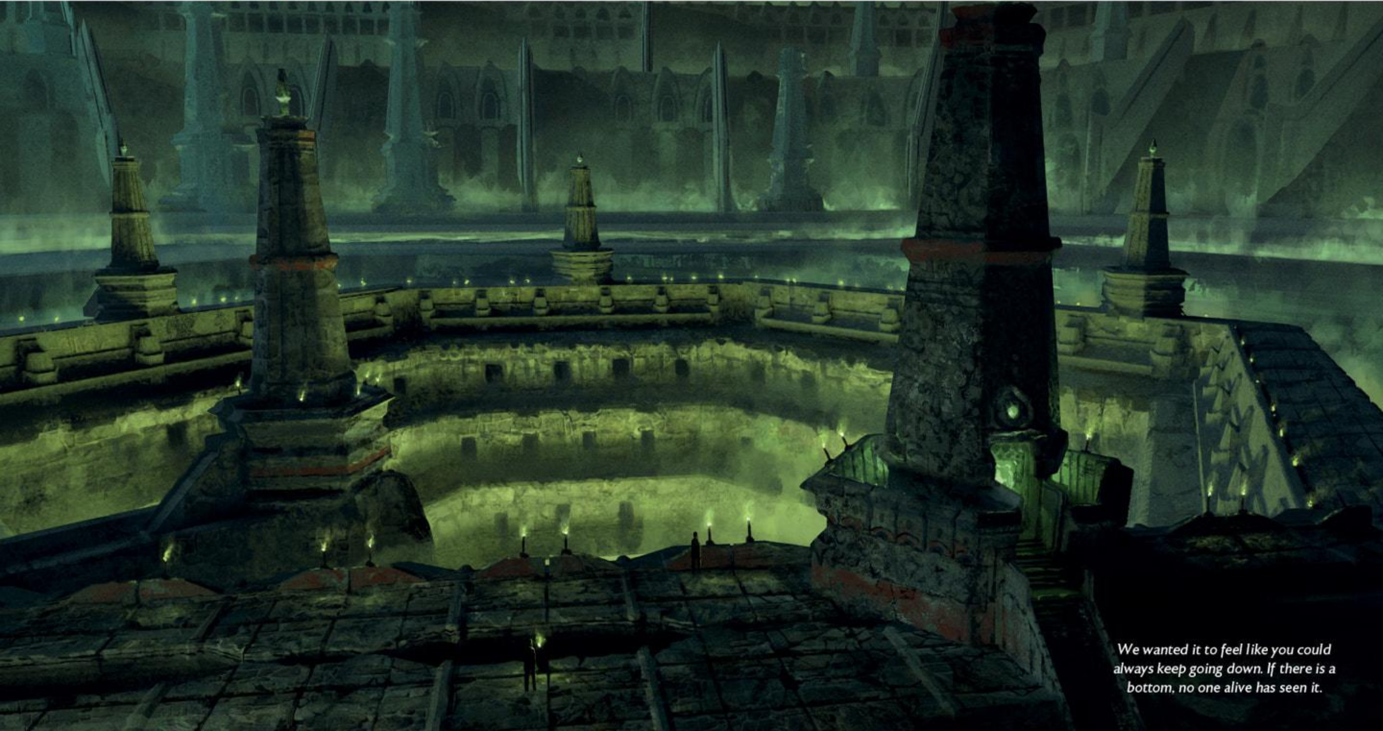
The Watchers live and work in the upper levels of the Grand Necropolis, a massive, ornate dungeon complex of catacombs, secret passages, and traps. Located right outside (and below) Nevarra City, it is constantly expanding, as upper-class Nevarrans begin planning their elaborate crypts while young. Modest tombs sit next to life-sized mansions and sealed-off royal sepulchers. Some undead are lovingly placed in elaborate tableaux where they can "reenact" scenes from real life. Others rest in coffins. The more robust corpses are armed and trained by the Watchers to patrol for thieves.



A colossal bell whose sound keeps demons at bay.



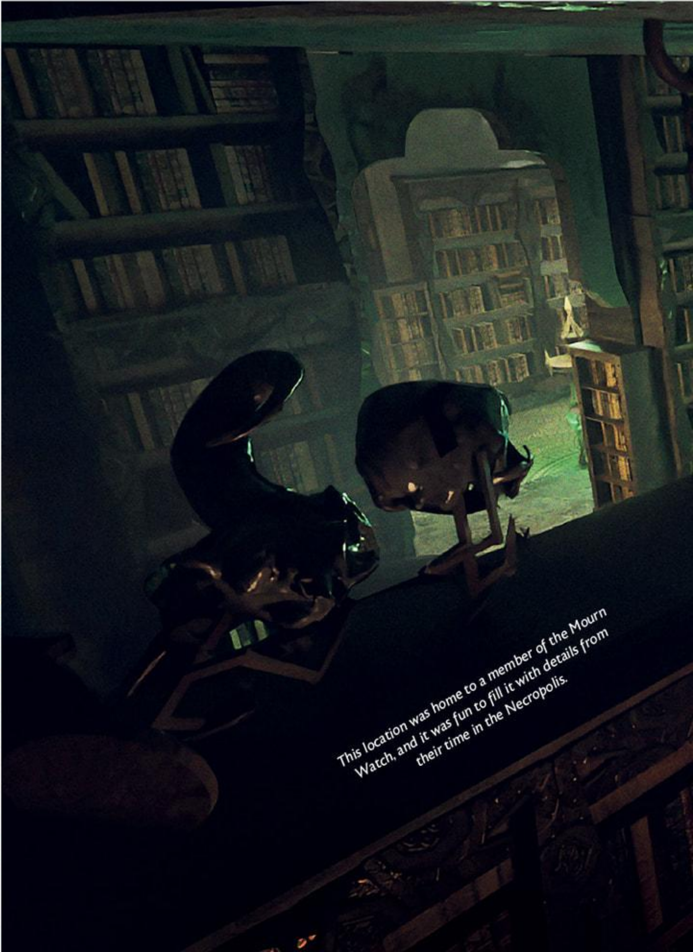




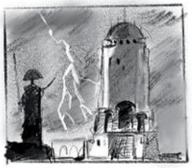
We wanted it to feel like you could always keep going down. If there is a bottom, no one alive has seen it.

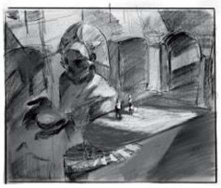
There are certain archetypes that we had a lot of fun exploring. One was the haunted Nevarran mansion.

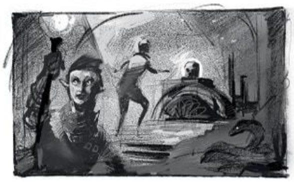
In keeping with the Mourn Watch faction overall, we wanted this mansion to feel spooky but not gruesome or morbid.



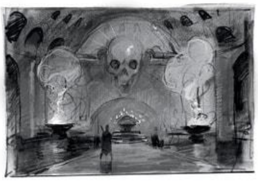
This location was home to a member of the Mourn Watch, and it was fun to fill it with details from their time in the Necropolis.

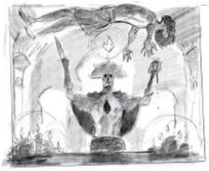


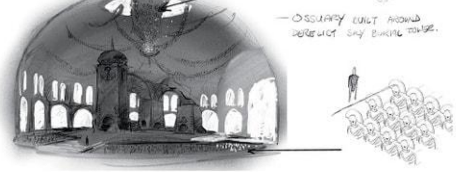


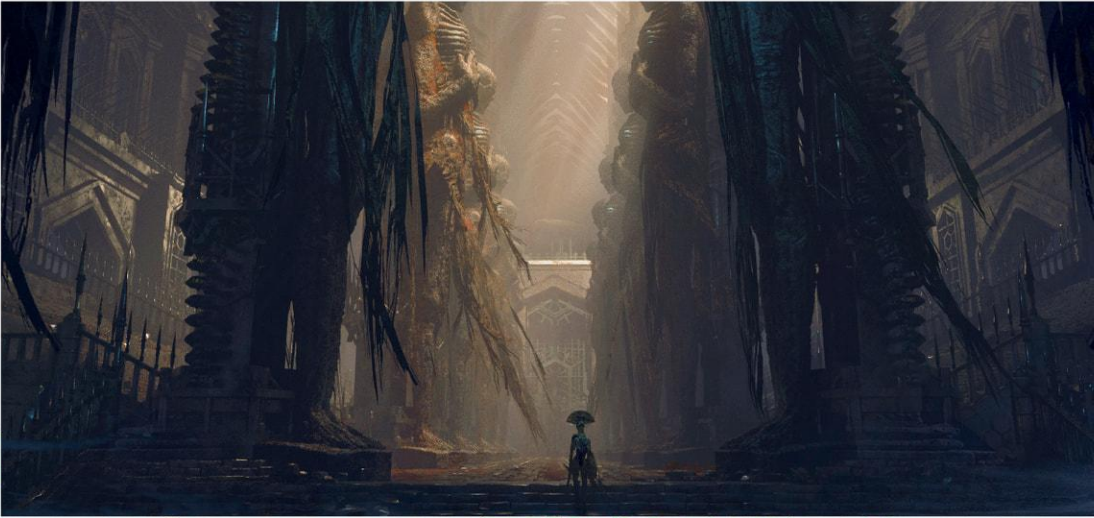


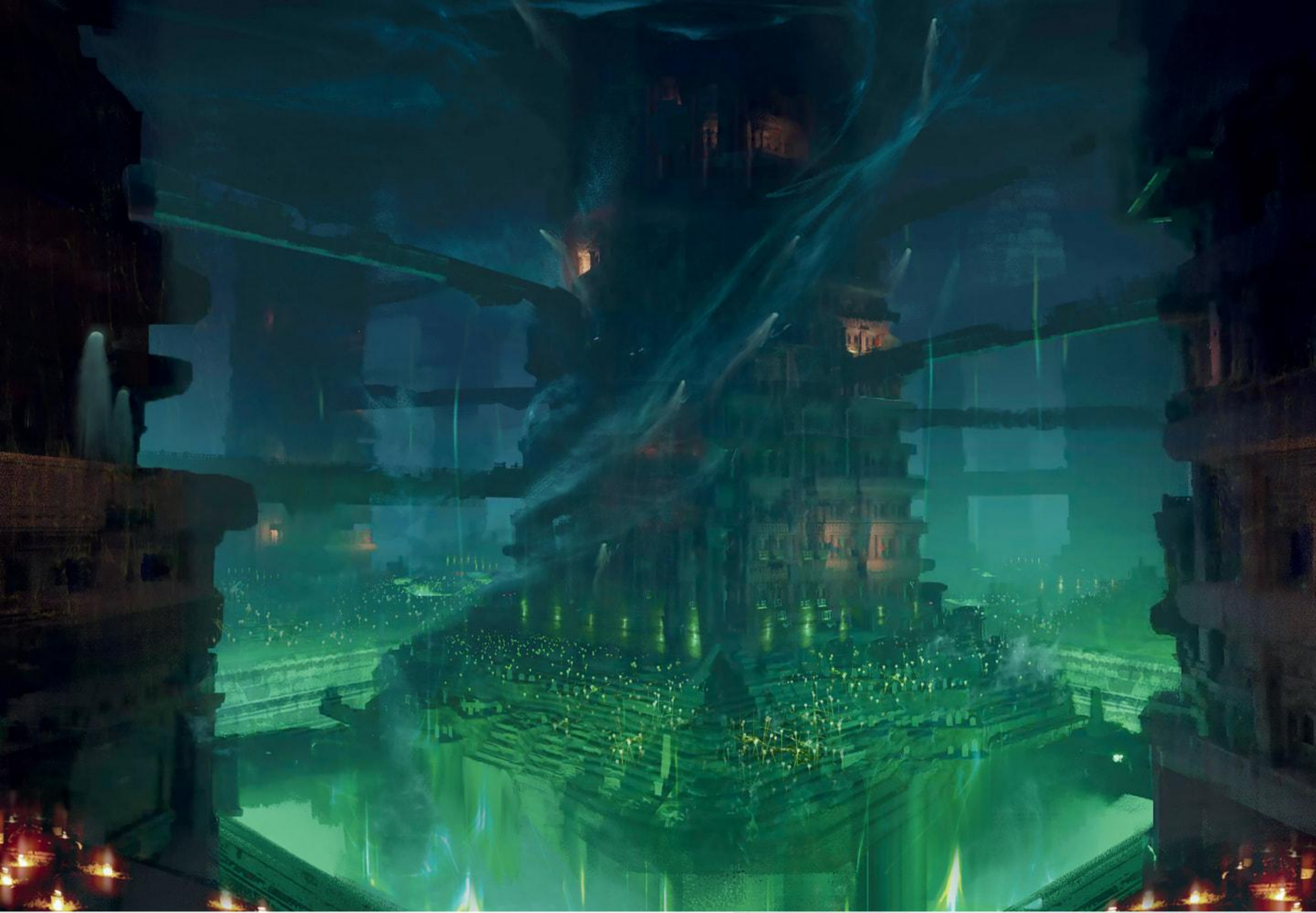
Some areas are little more than tightly packed crawl spaces. Others look like wealthy subterranean neighborhoods. Still others look like vast sunless fields littered with tombstones and statuary.



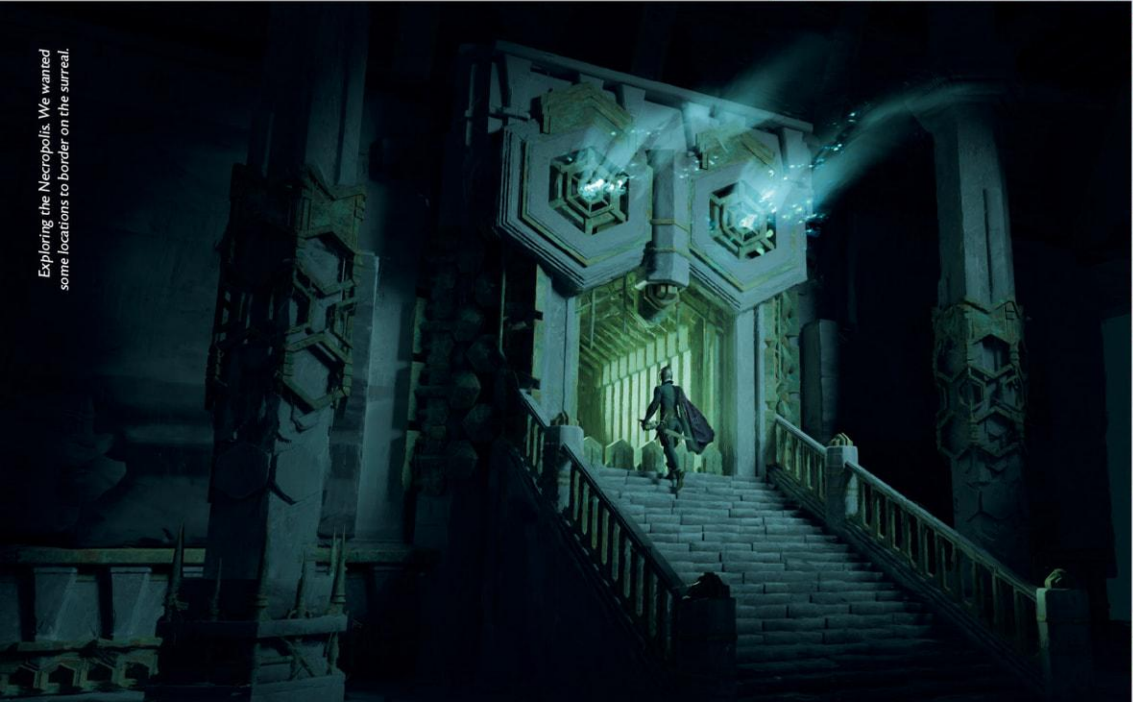



— OSSUARY BUILT AROUND DERELICT SKY BURIAL TOWER.

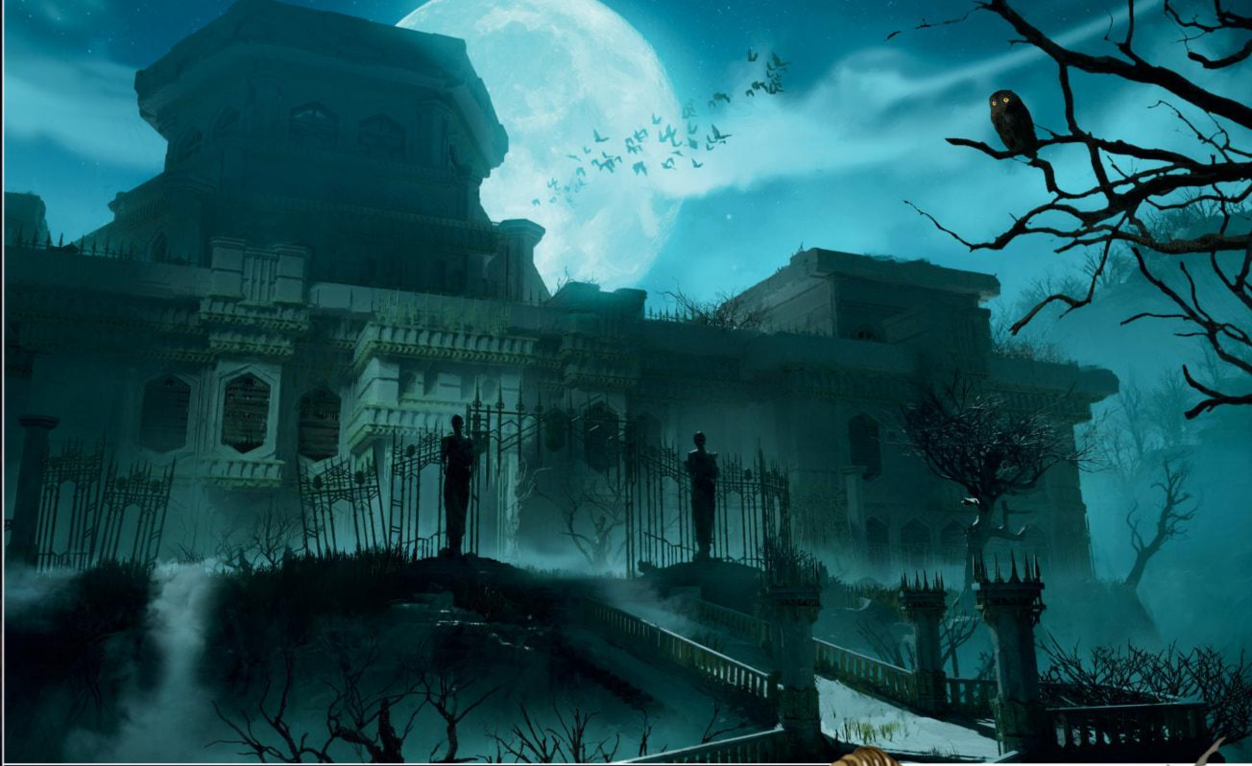




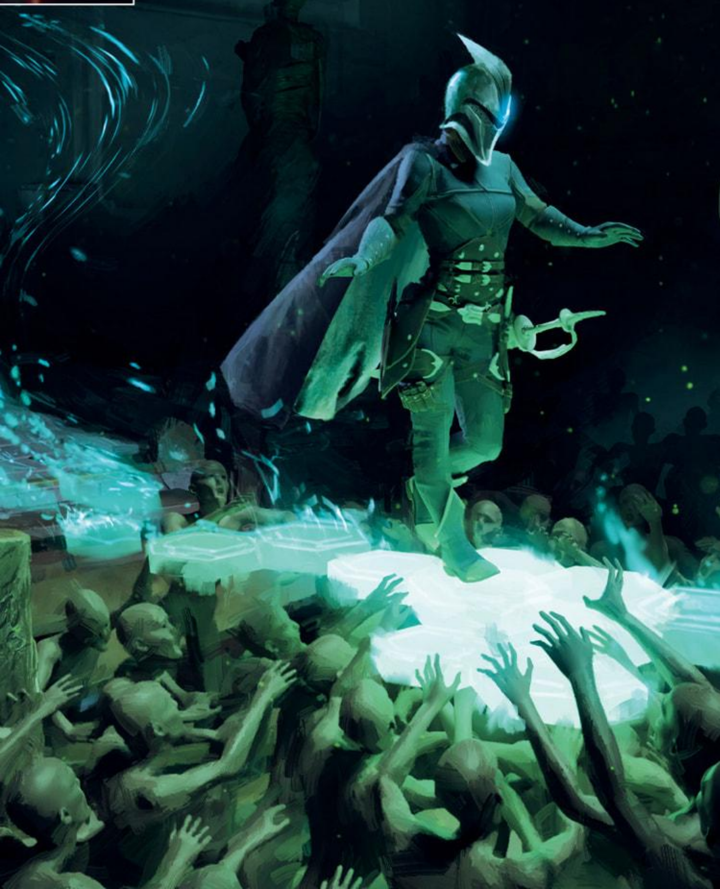
The Necropolis really is huge. This is one of an unknown number of mausoleum towers that stretch up into darkness. Untethered spirits drift by regularly.

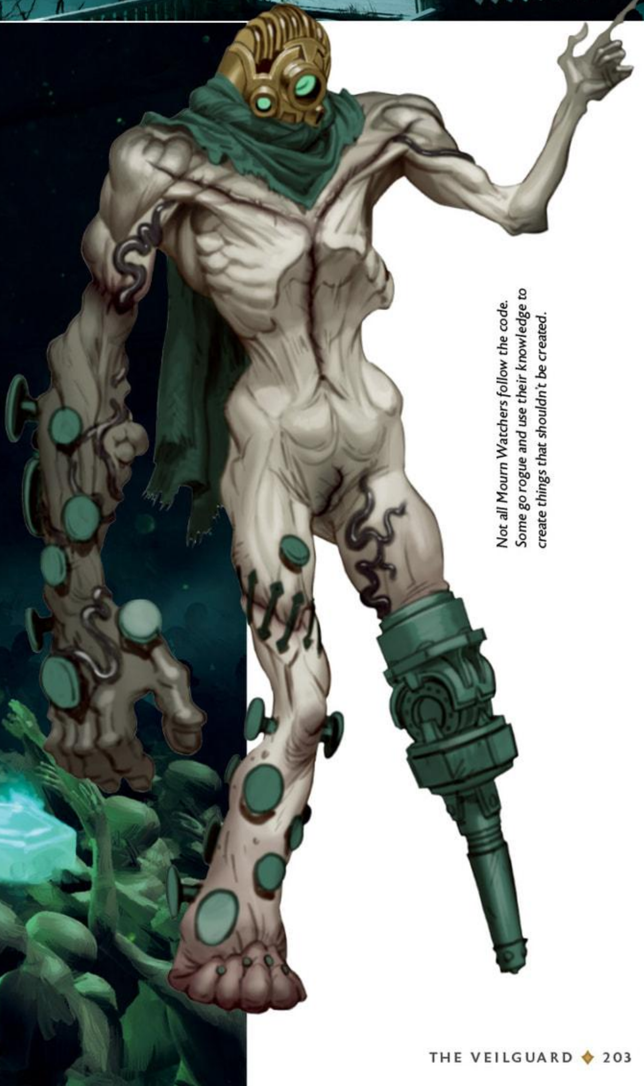


Exploring the Necropolis. We wanted some locations to border on the surreal.

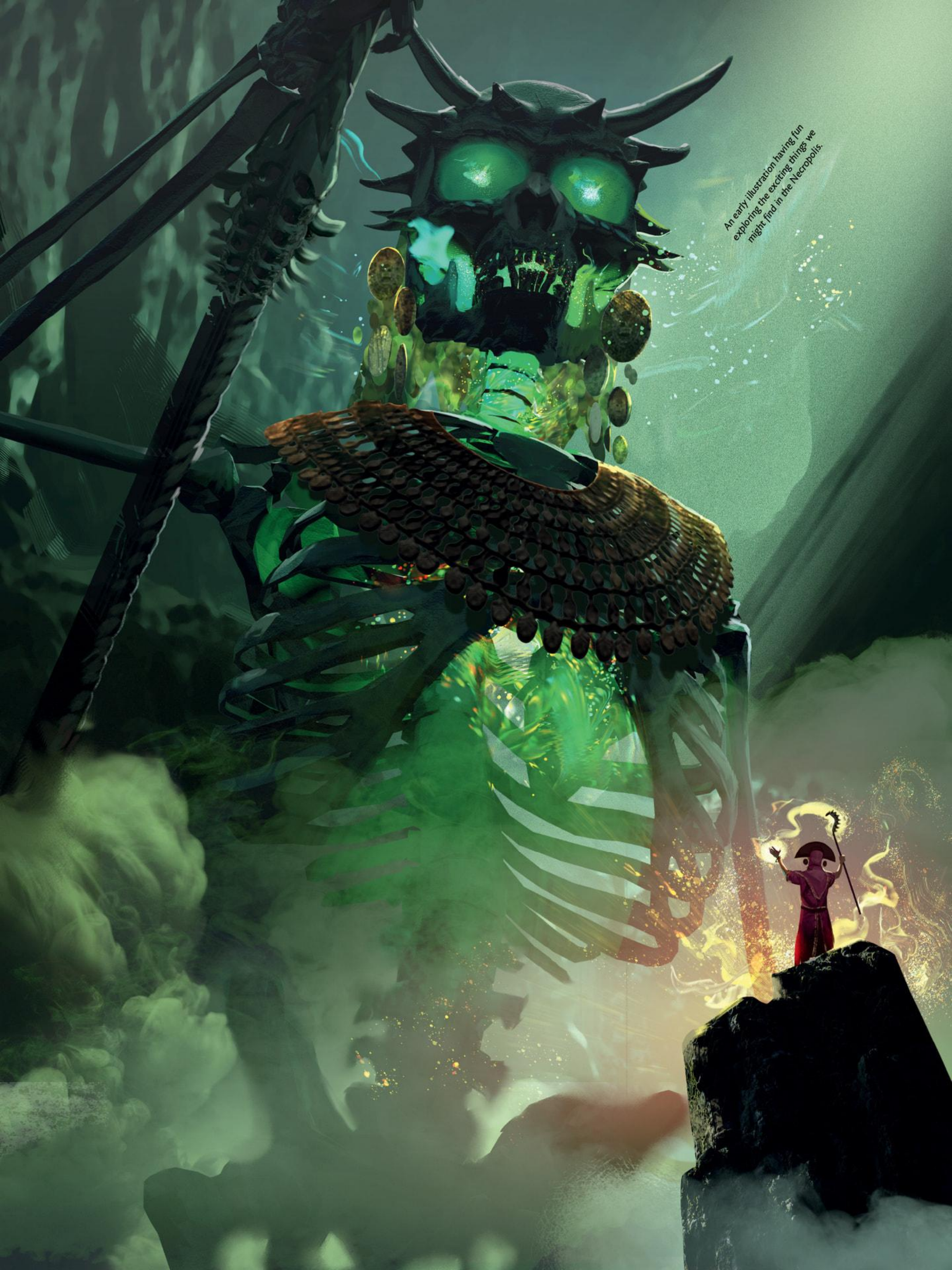


An unsettling magical path in the Necropolis that forms under your feet as you walk, surrounded by a dark pit of the undead.

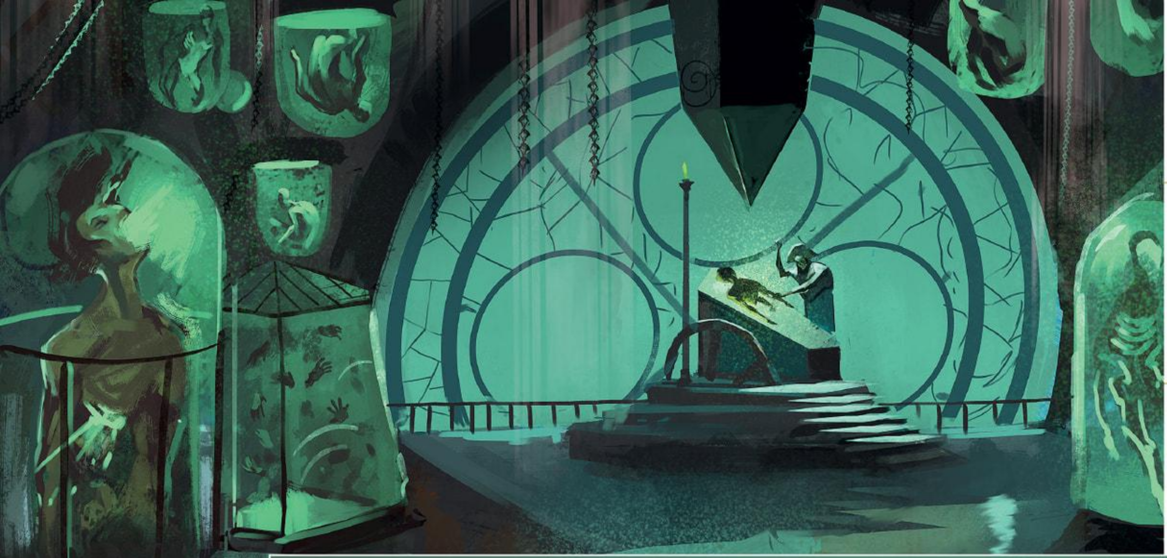




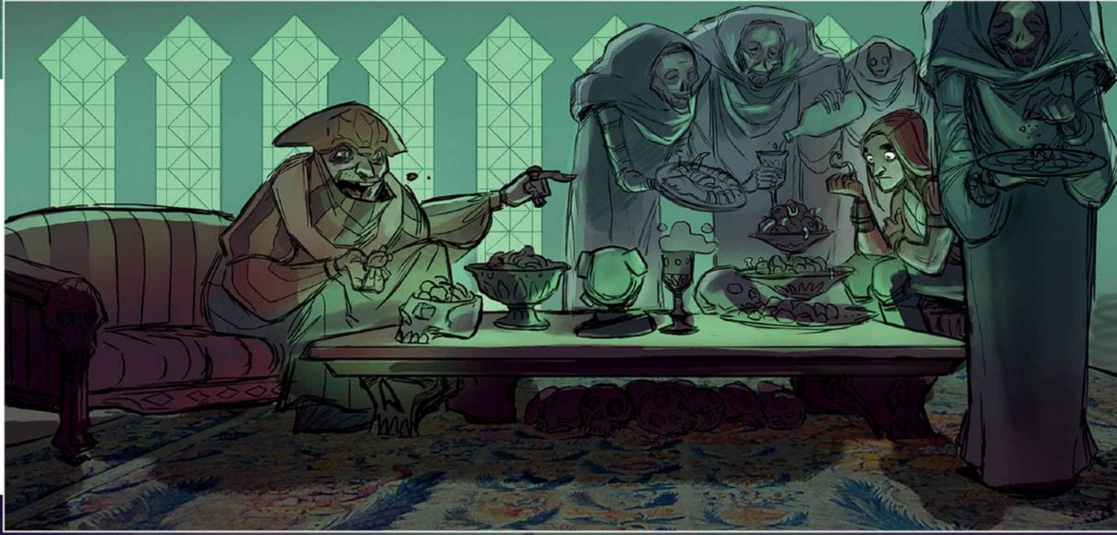
Not all Mourn Watchers follow the code. Some go rogue and use their knowledge to create things that shouldn't be created.



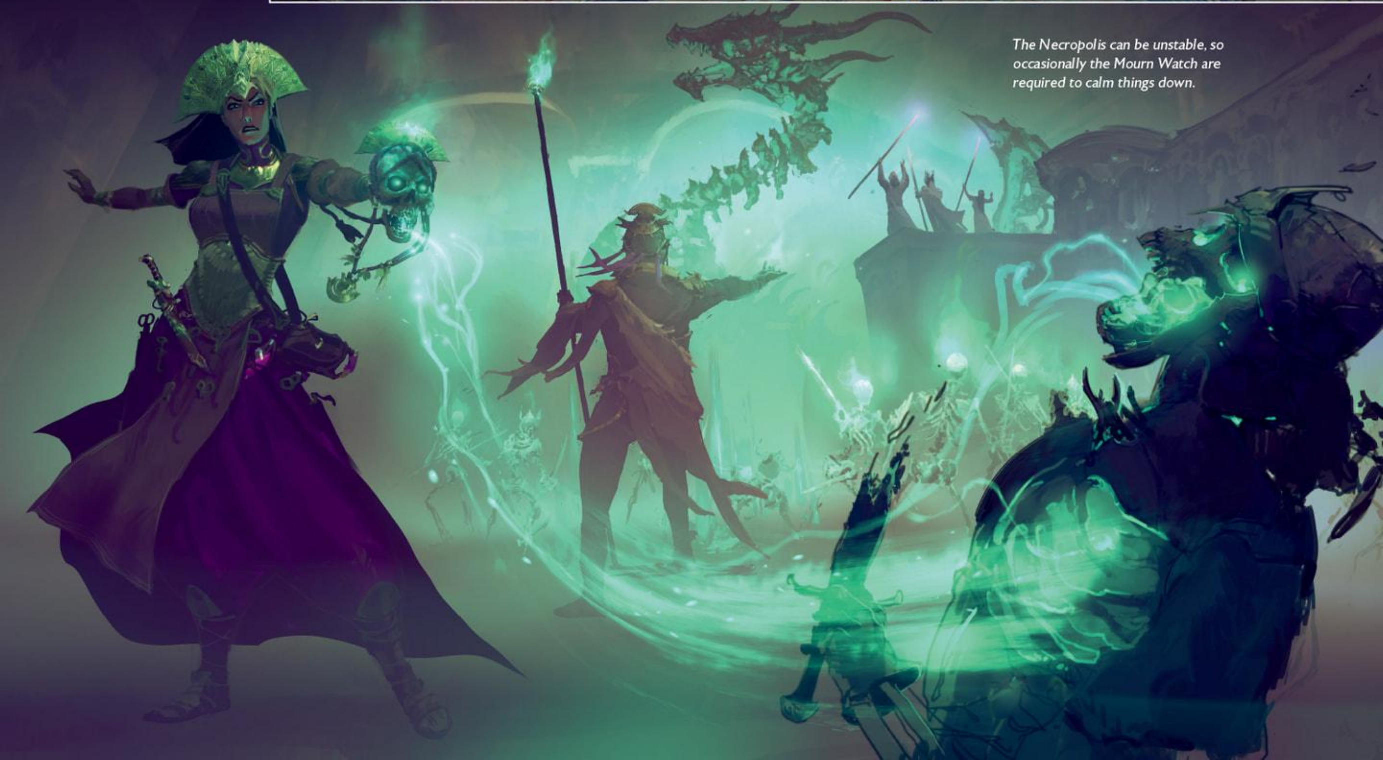
An early illustration having fun exploring the exciting things we might find in the Necropolis.



A sketch exploring how far along the mad scientist spectrum we wanted to go.



Dinner with the Mourn Watch, with helpful undead servants that have lost their grasp on the definition of "fresh."

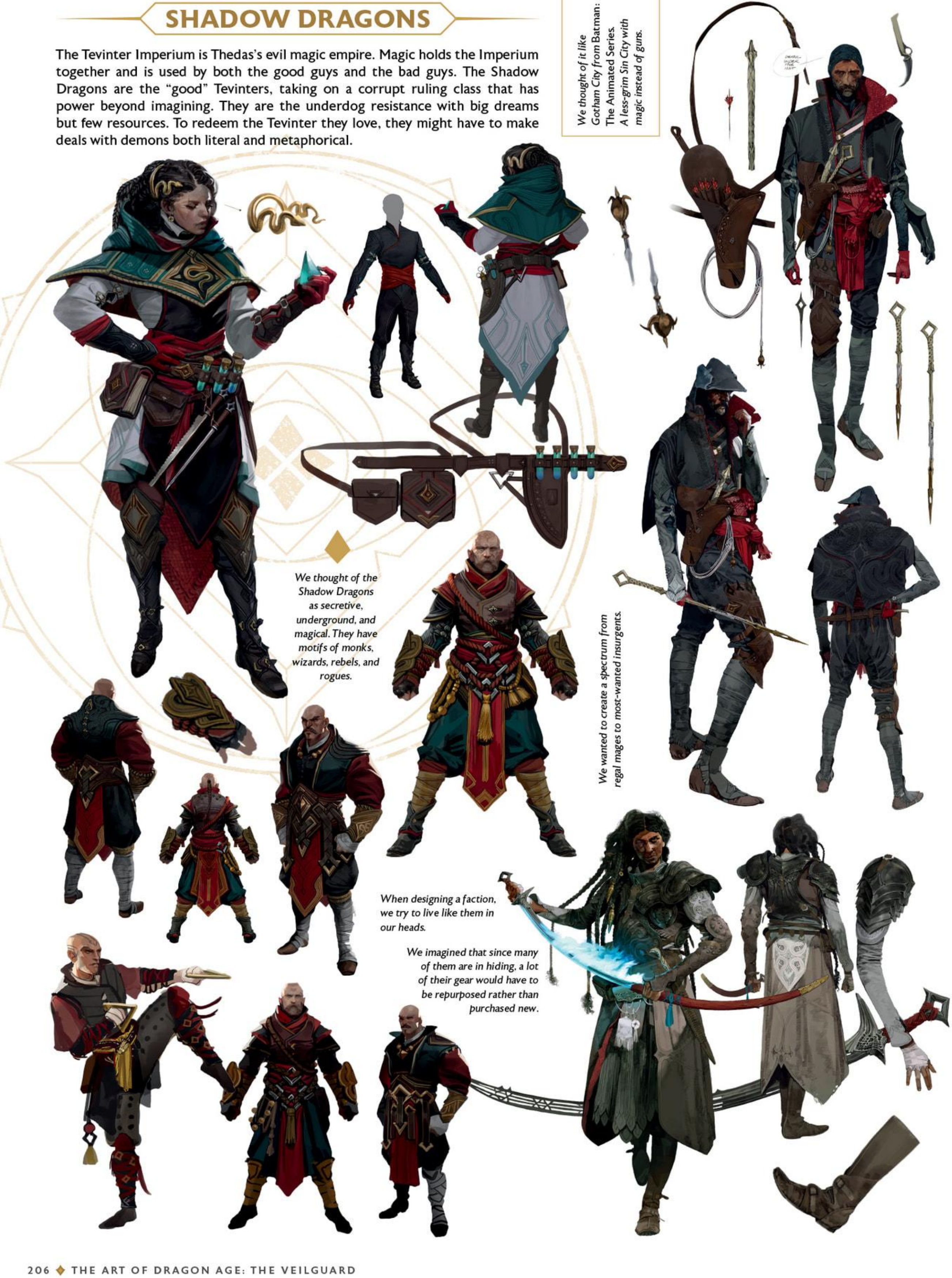


The Necropolis can be unstable, so occasionally the Mourn Watch are required to calm things down.

SHADOW DRAGONS

The Tevinter Imperium is Thedas's evil magic empire. Magic holds the Imperium together and is used by both the good guys and the bad guys. The Shadow Dragons are the "good" Tevinters, taking on a corrupt ruling class that has power beyond imagining. They are the underdog resistance with big dreams but few resources. To redeem the Tevinter they love, they might have to make deals with demons both literal and metaphorical.

We thought of it like Gotham City from Batman: The Animated Series. A less-grim Sin City with magic instead of guns.

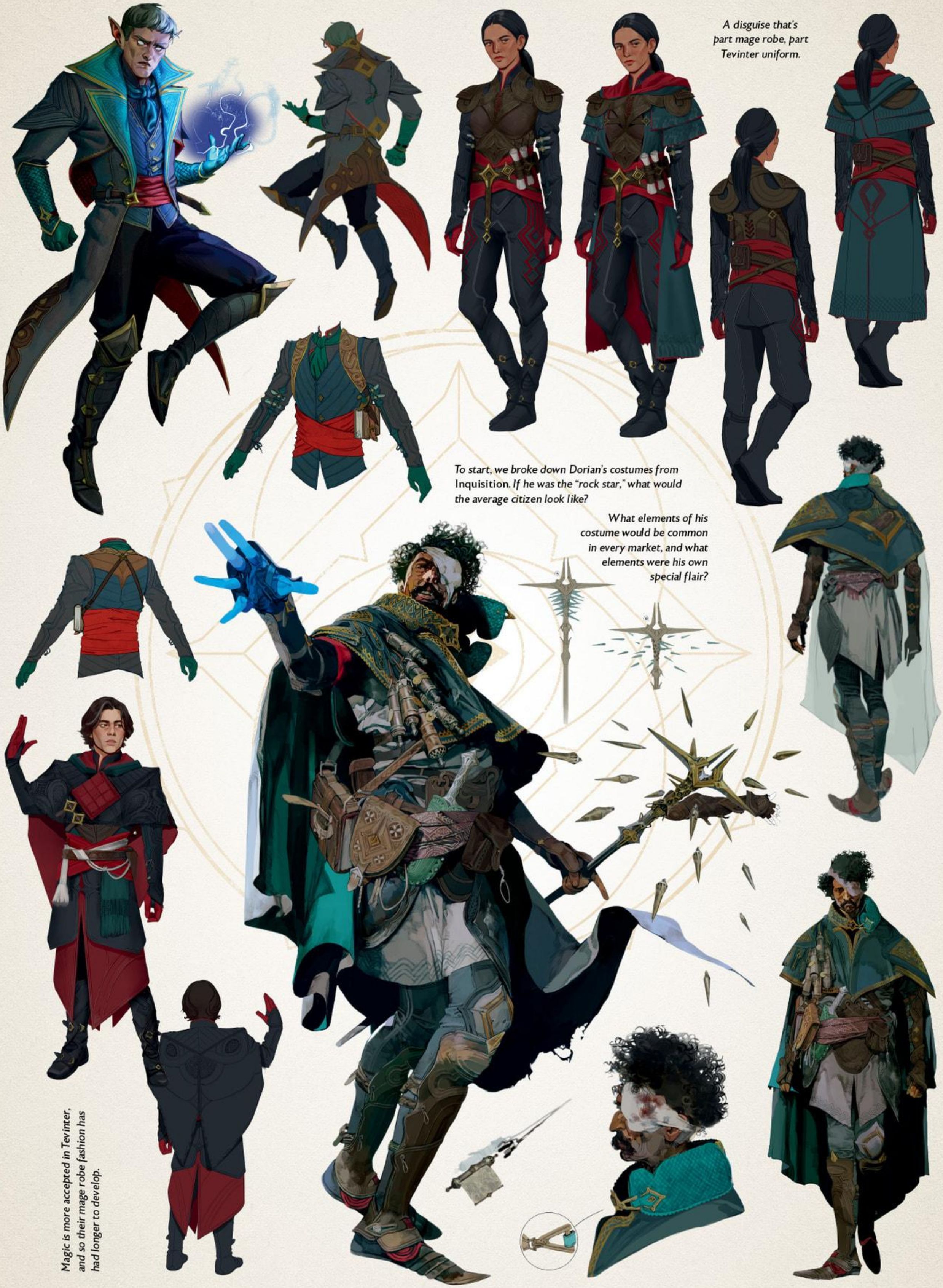


We thought of the Shadow Dragons as secretive, underground, and magical. They have motifs of monks, wizards, rebels, and rogues.

We wanted to create a spectrum from regal mages to most-wanted insurgents.

When designing a faction, we try to live like them in our heads.

We imagined that since many of them are in hiding, a lot of their gear would have to be repurposed rather than purchased new.

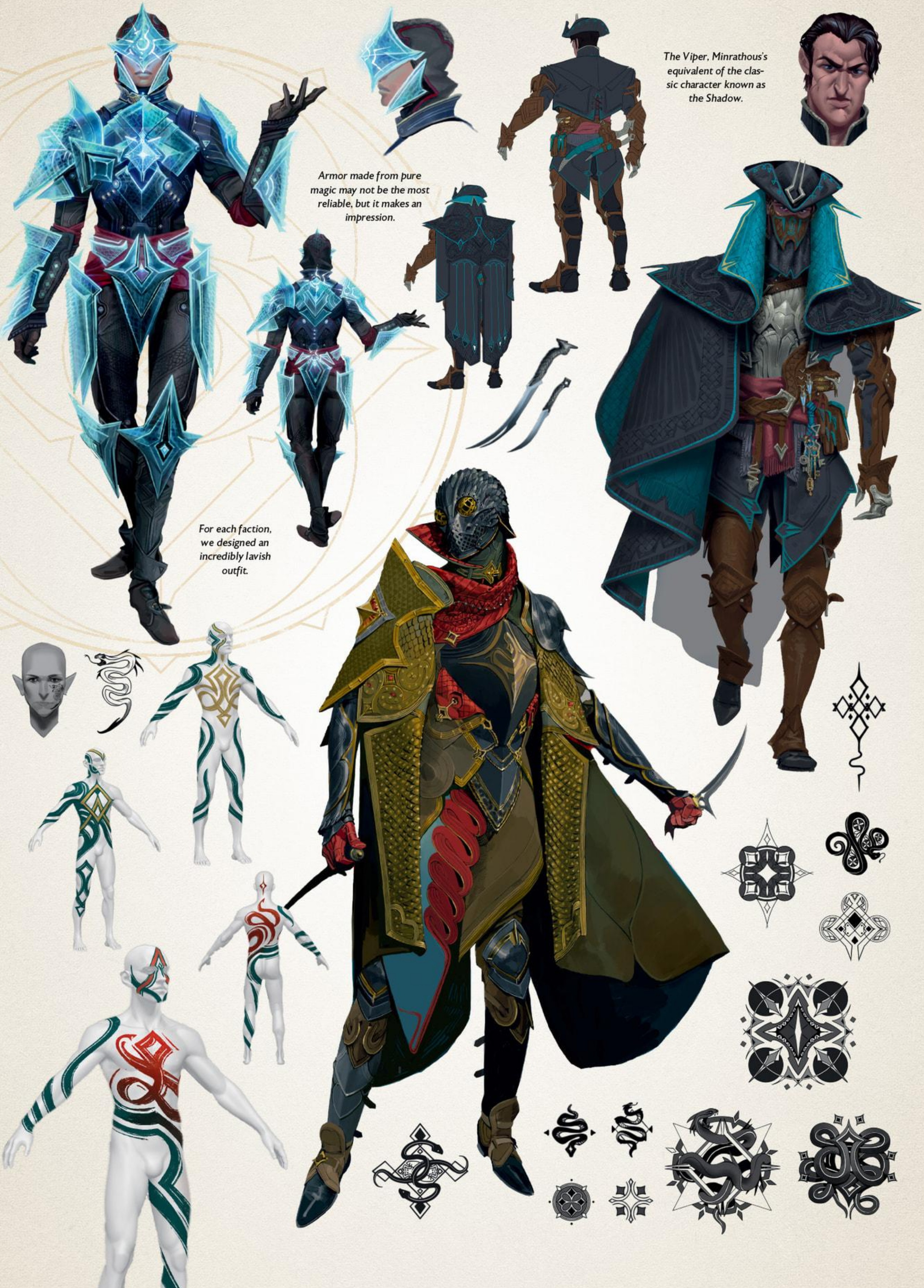


A disguise that's part mage robe, part Tevinter uniform.

To start, we broke down Dorian's costumes from Inquisition. If he was the "rock star," what would the average citizen look like?

What elements of his costume would be common in every market, and what elements were his own special flair?

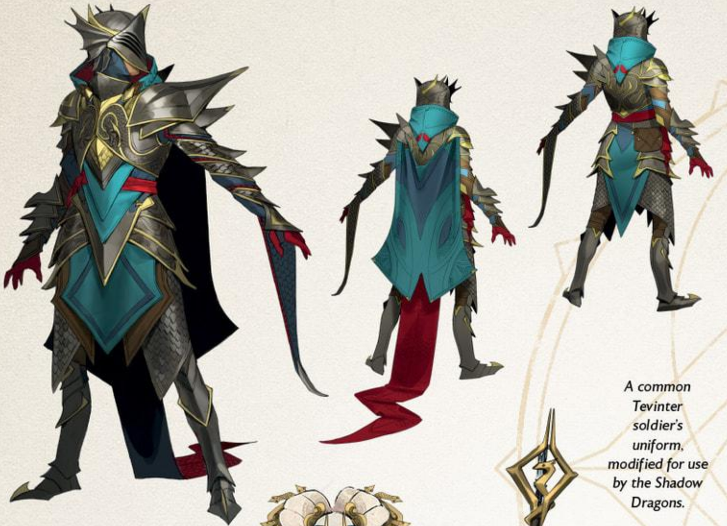
Magic is more accepted in Tevinter, and so their mage robe fashion has had longer to develop.

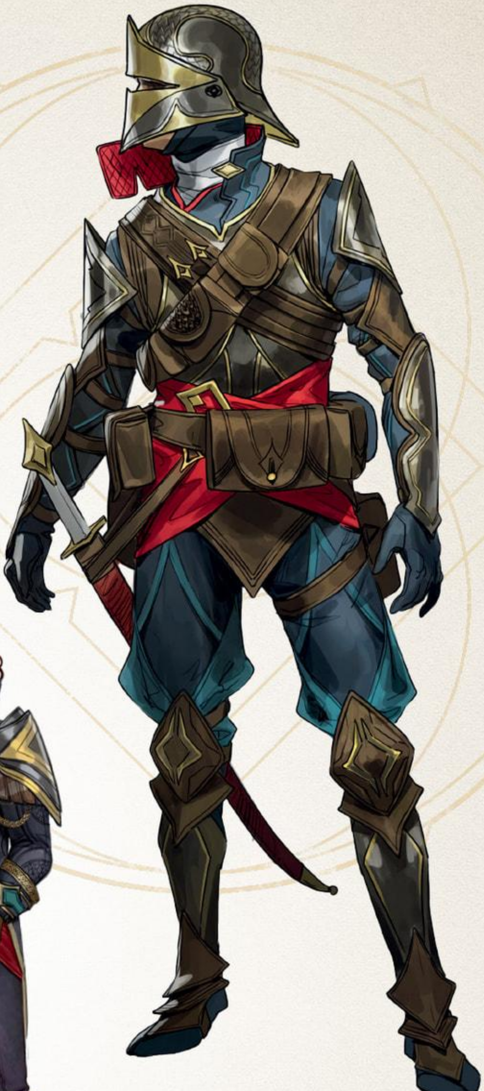


The Viper, Minrathous's equivalent of the classic character known as the Shadow.

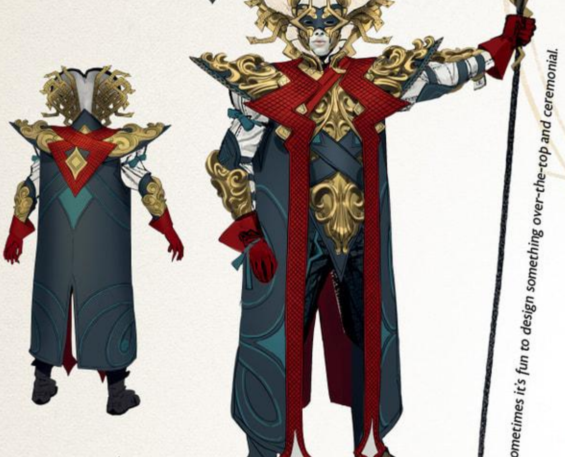
Armor made from pure magic may not be the most reliable, but it makes an impression.

For each faction, we designed an incredibly lavish outfit.

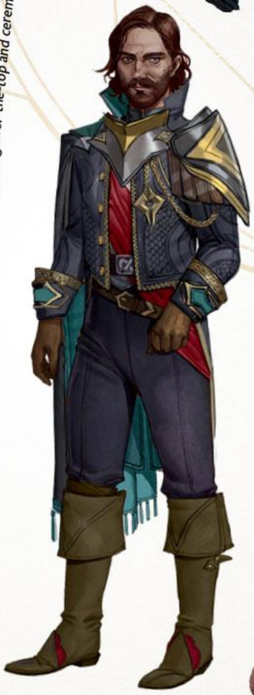


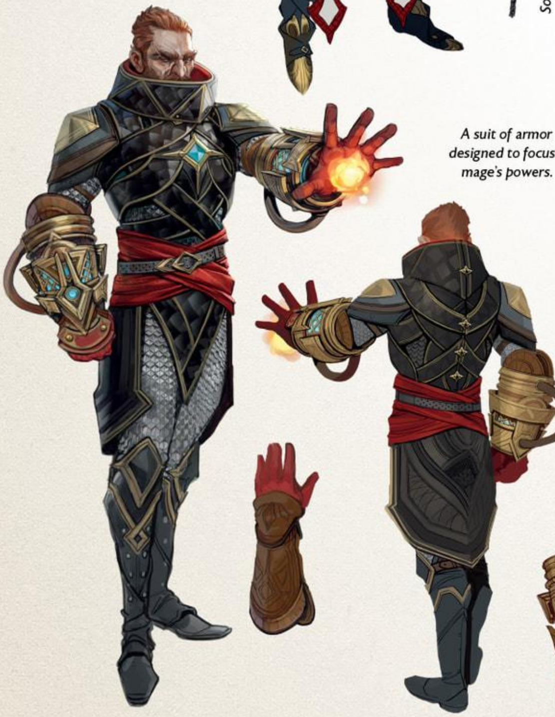


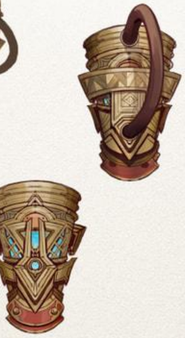
A common Tevinter soldier's uniform, modified for use by the Shadow Dragons.



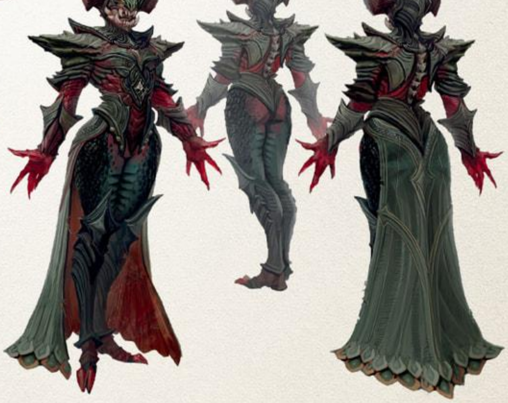
Sometimes it's fun to design something over-the-top and ceremonial.







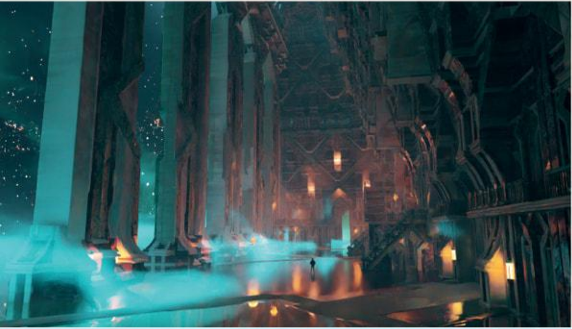
A suit of armor designed to focus a mage's powers.

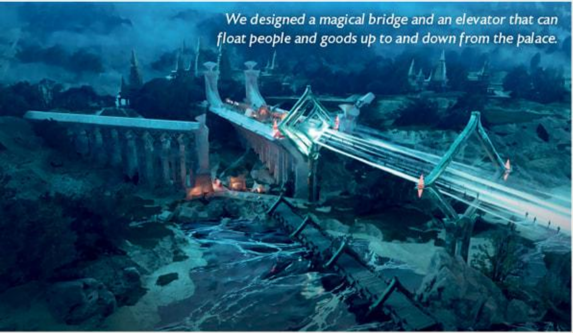


A Halloween costume for the Shadow Dragons: a demon.

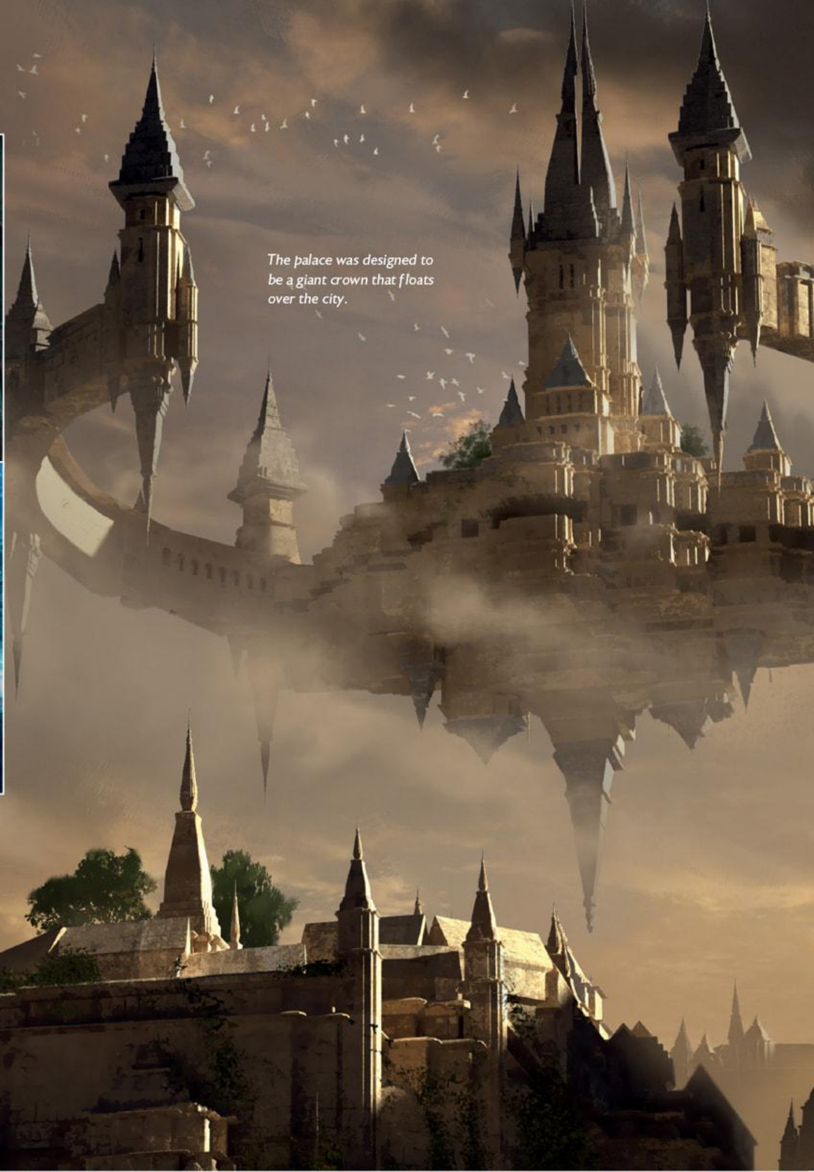
TEVINTER

Minrathous is where it all happens. The ruling body of Tevinter operates here. The cabal of magisters and the Venatori who oppose the Shadow Dragons are here. It is a city of magical towers and dirty streets, where wealth and luxury exist alongside poverty and suffering. There are no rules in Minrathous, except one: trust nobody.

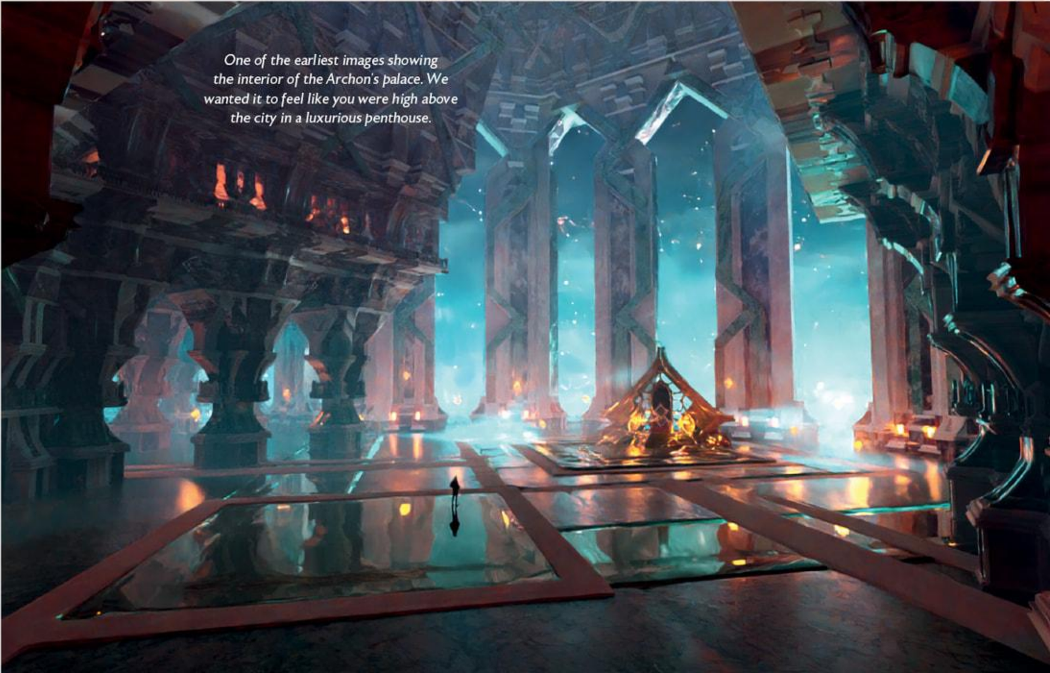




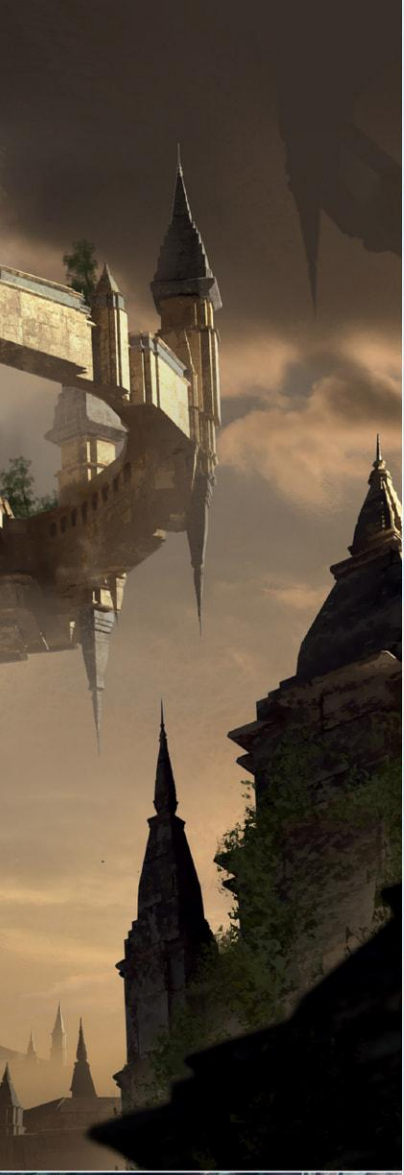
We designed a magical bridge and an elevator that can float people and goods up to and down from the palace.

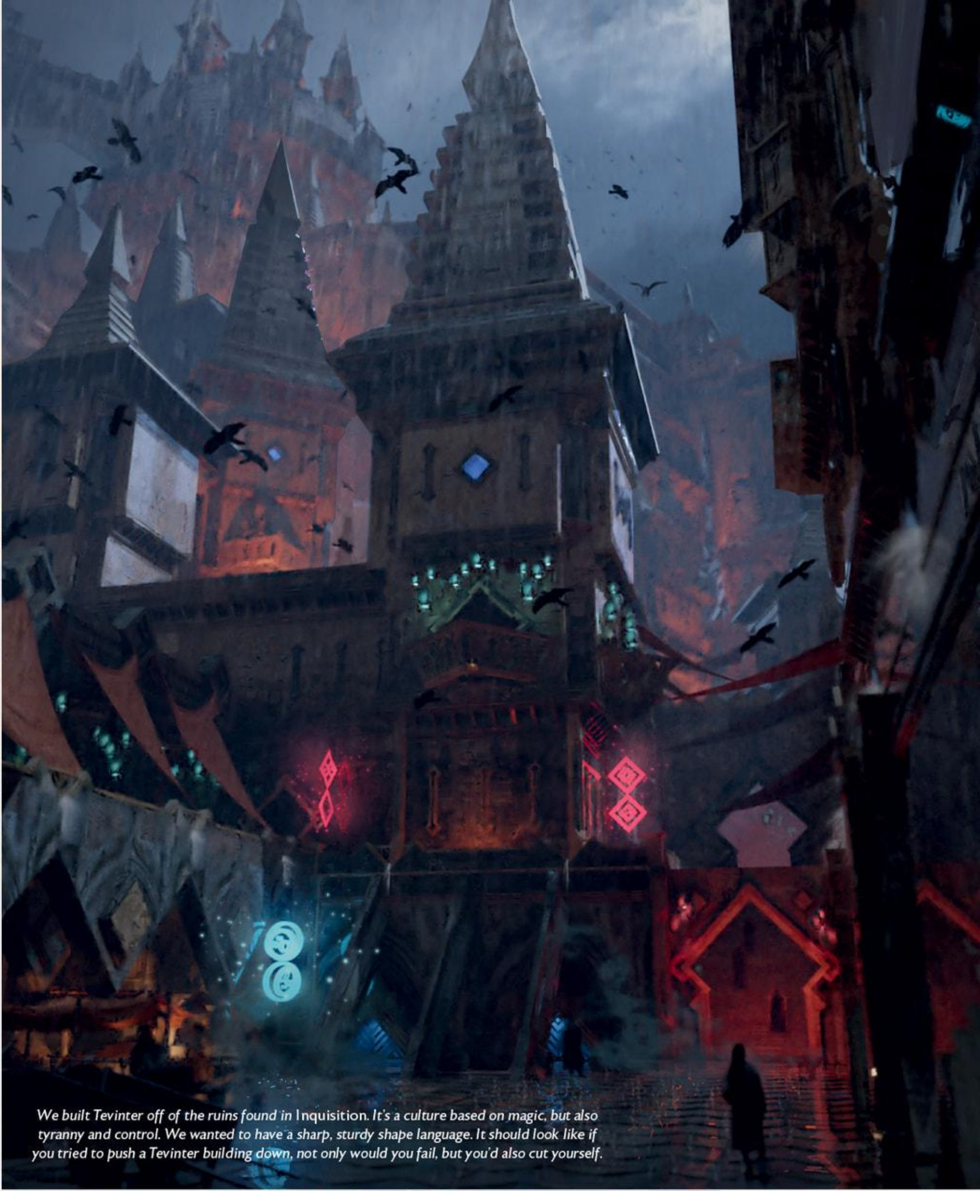


The palace was designed to be a giant crown that floats over the city.

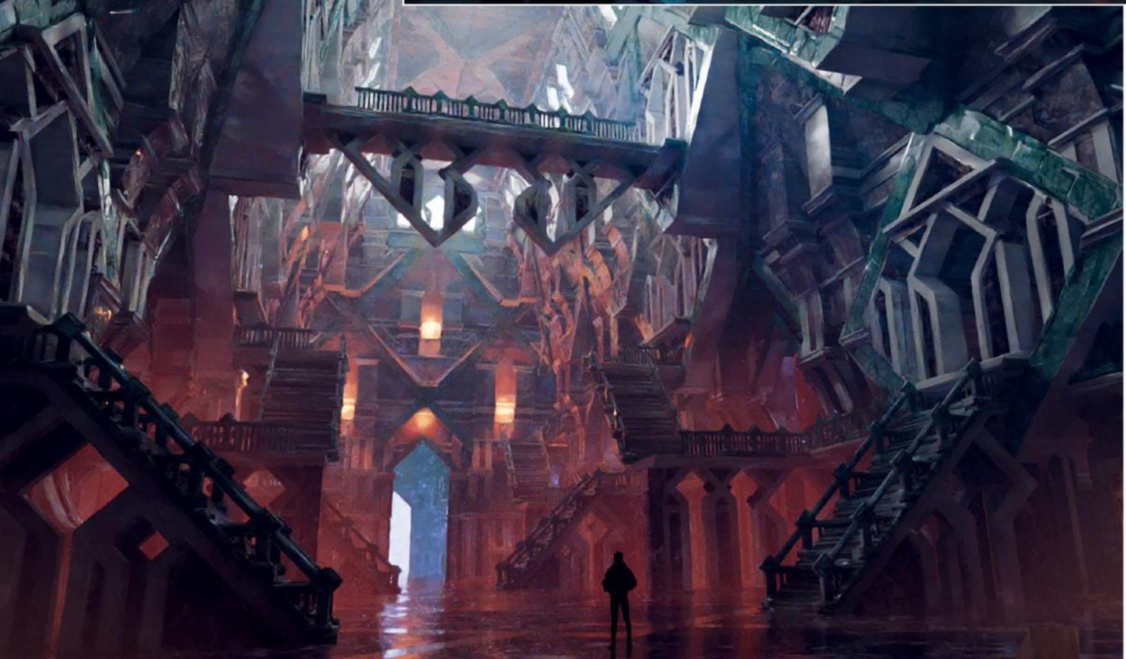


One of the earliest images showing the interior of the Archon's palace. We wanted it to feel like you were high above the city in a luxurious penthouse.

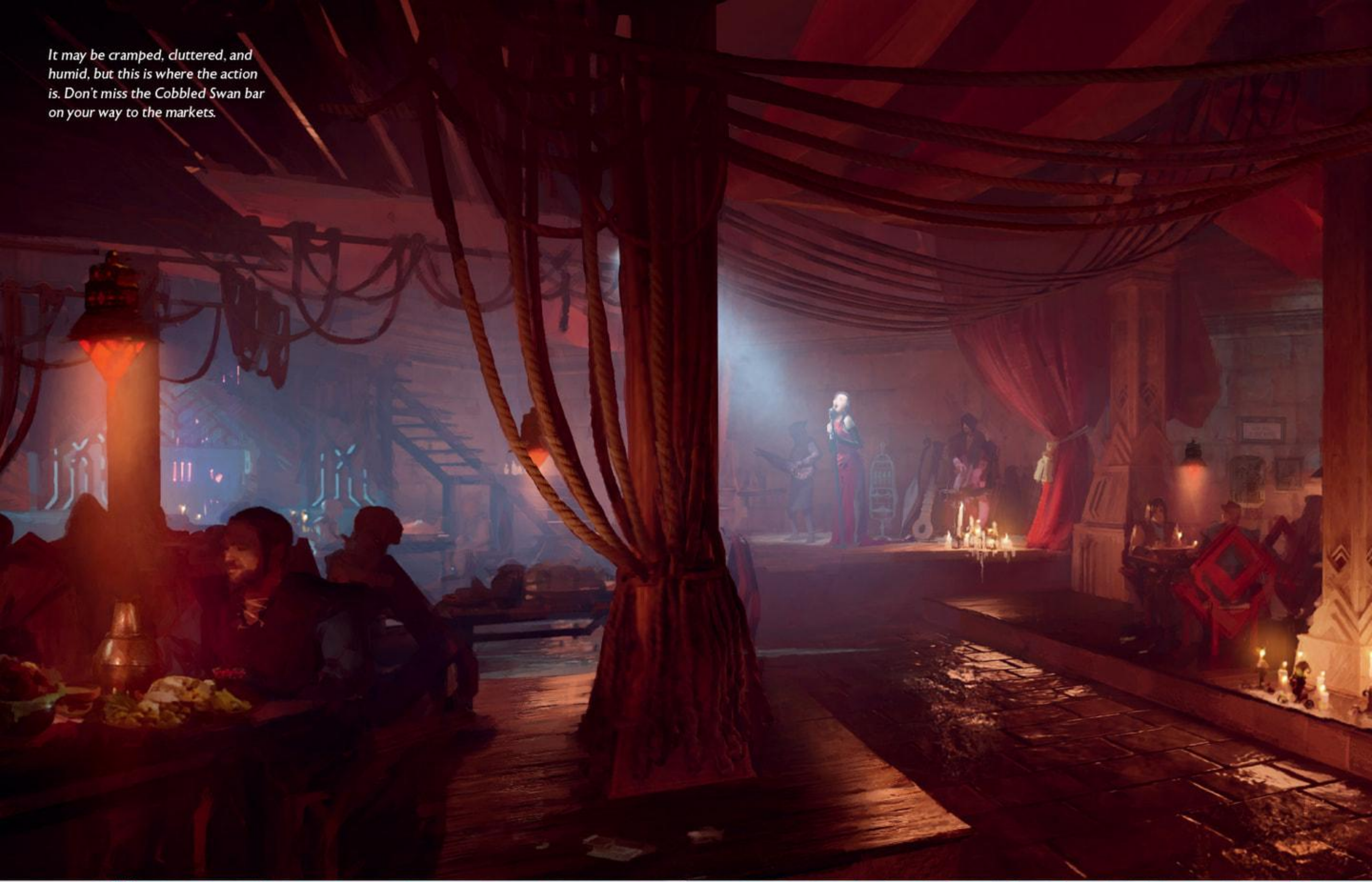




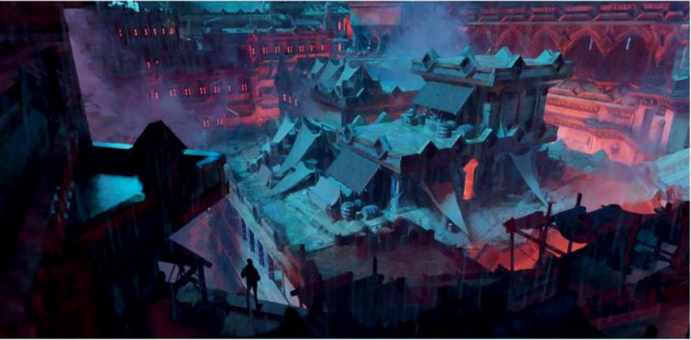
We built Tevinter off of the ruins found in Inquisition. It's a culture based on magic, but also tyranny and control. We wanted to have a sharp, sturdy shape language. It should look like if you tried to push a Tevinter building down, not only would you fail, but you'd also cut yourself.

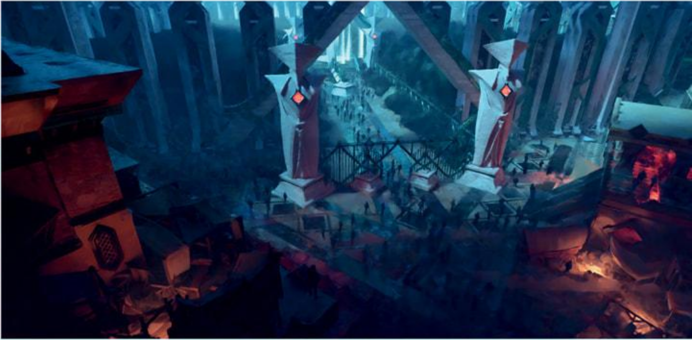


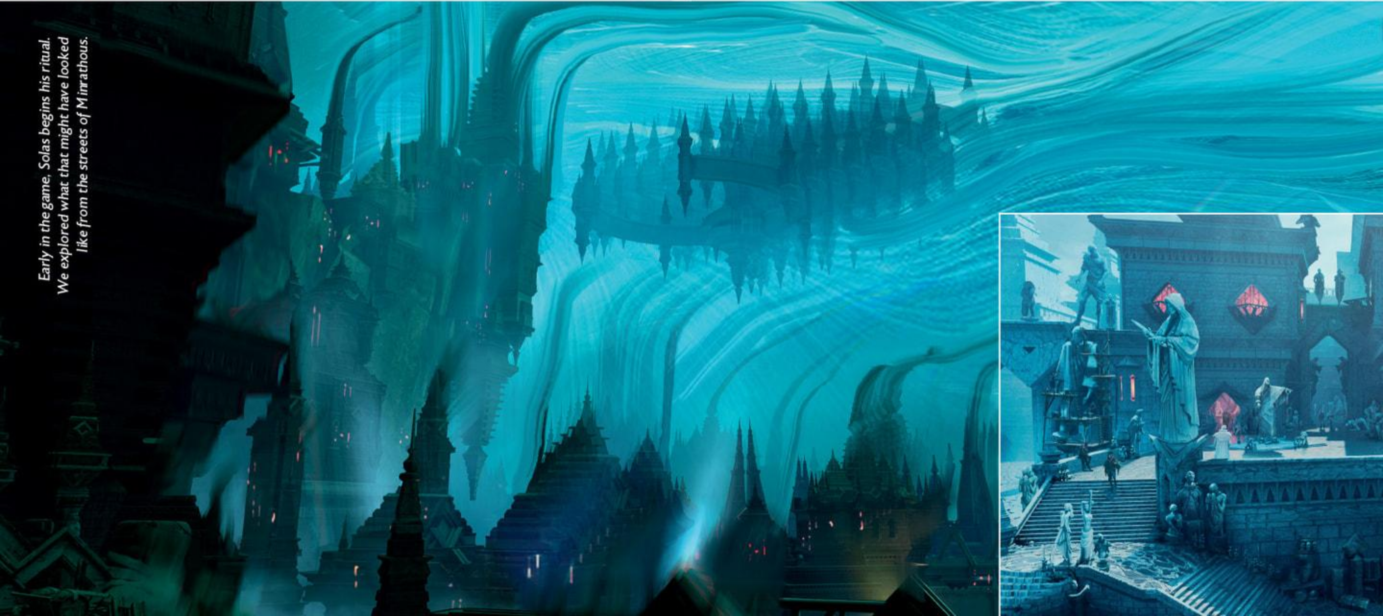
The Tevinter Imperium used to be the greatest empire in Thedas. That age is long gone, a truth Tevinter's ruling class are unable or unwilling to grasp. They remain convinced of their superiority, and this complacence has led to the slow crumbling of the Imperium.



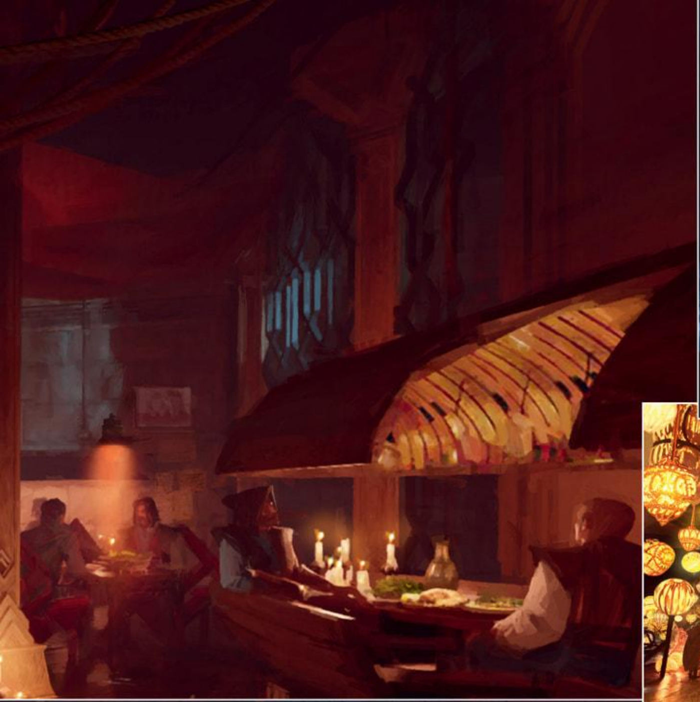
It may be cramped, cluttered, and humid, but this is where the action is. Don't miss the Cobbled Swan bar on your way to the markets.

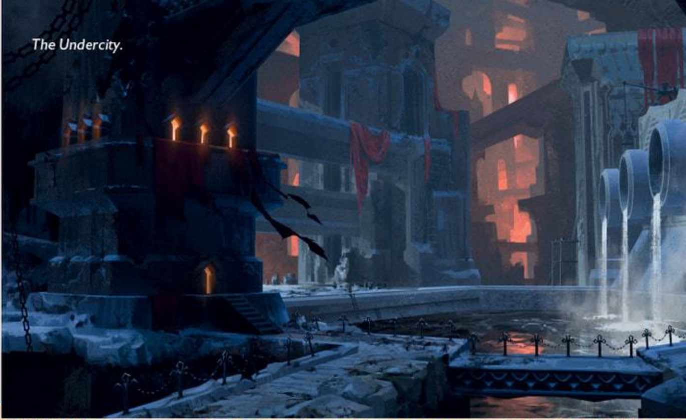




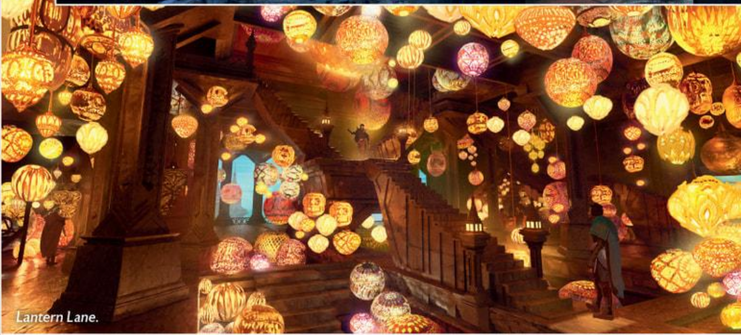


Early in the game, Solas begins his ritual. We explored what that might have looked like from the streets of Minrathous.

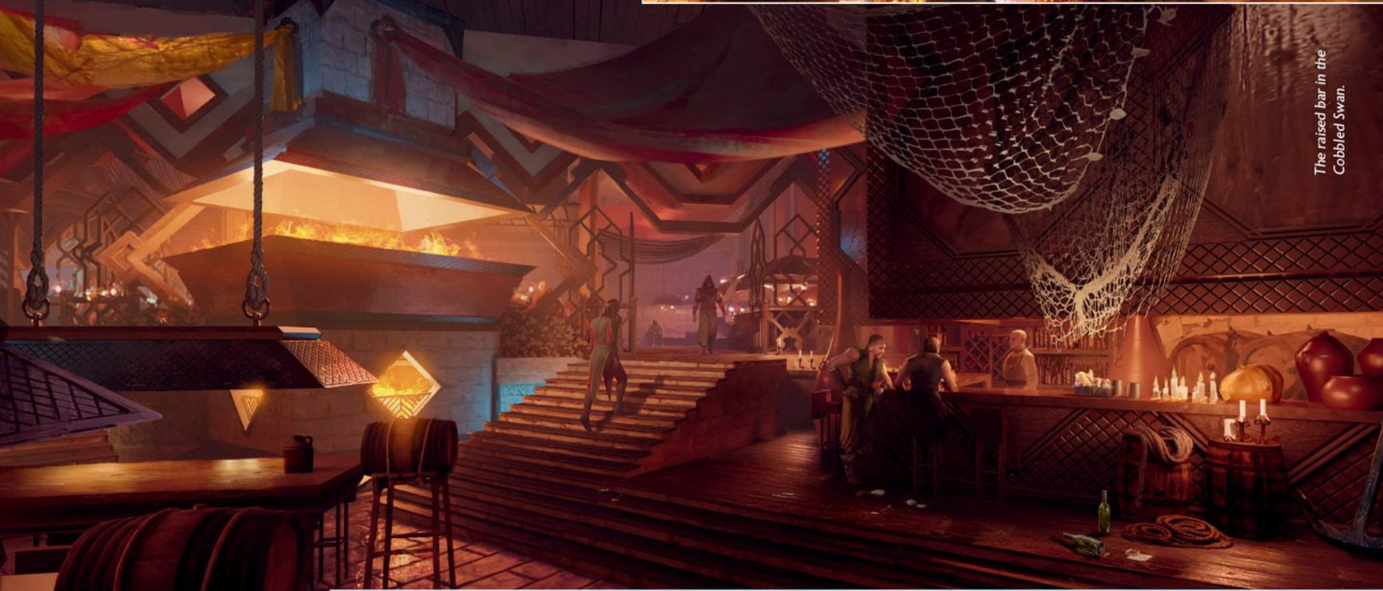




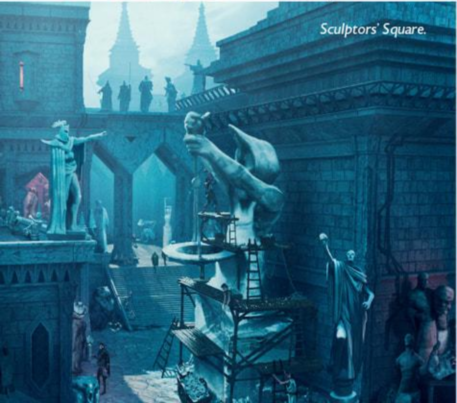
The Undercity.



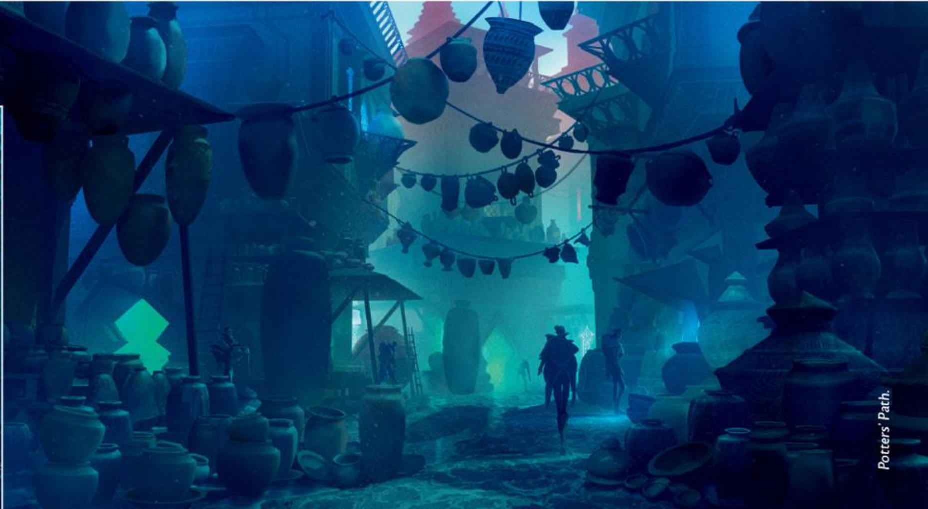
Lantern Lane.



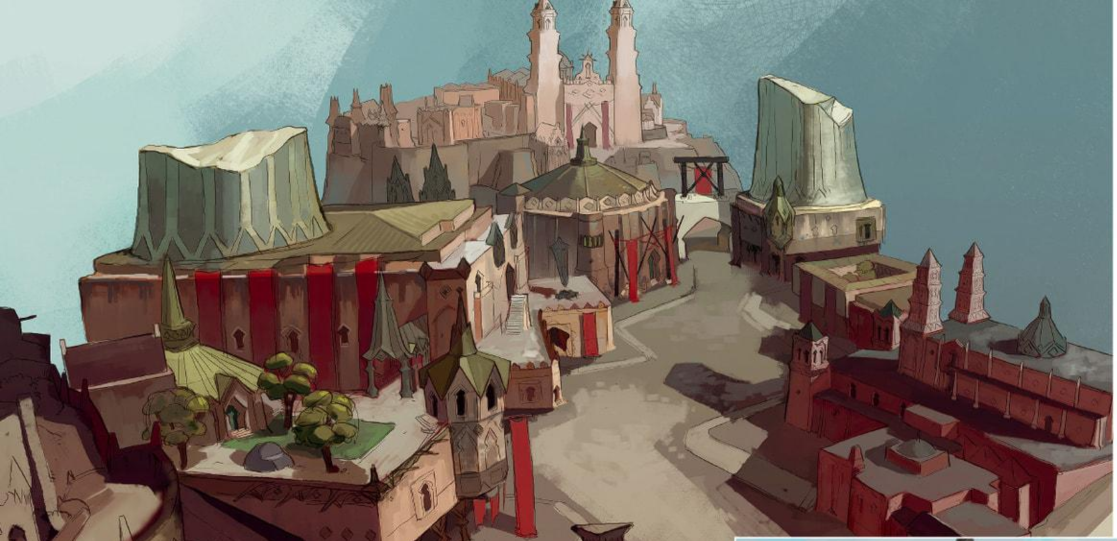
The raised bar in the Cobbled Swan.



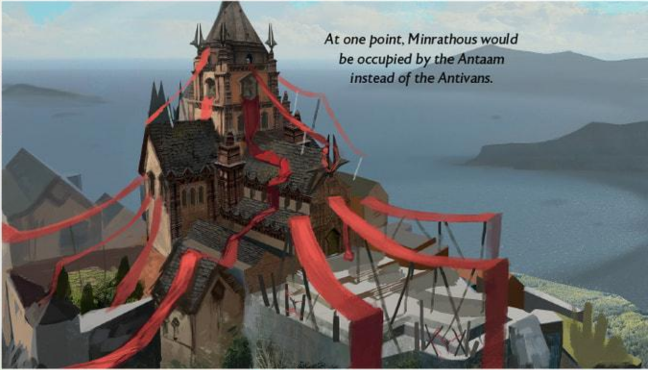
Sculptors' Square.



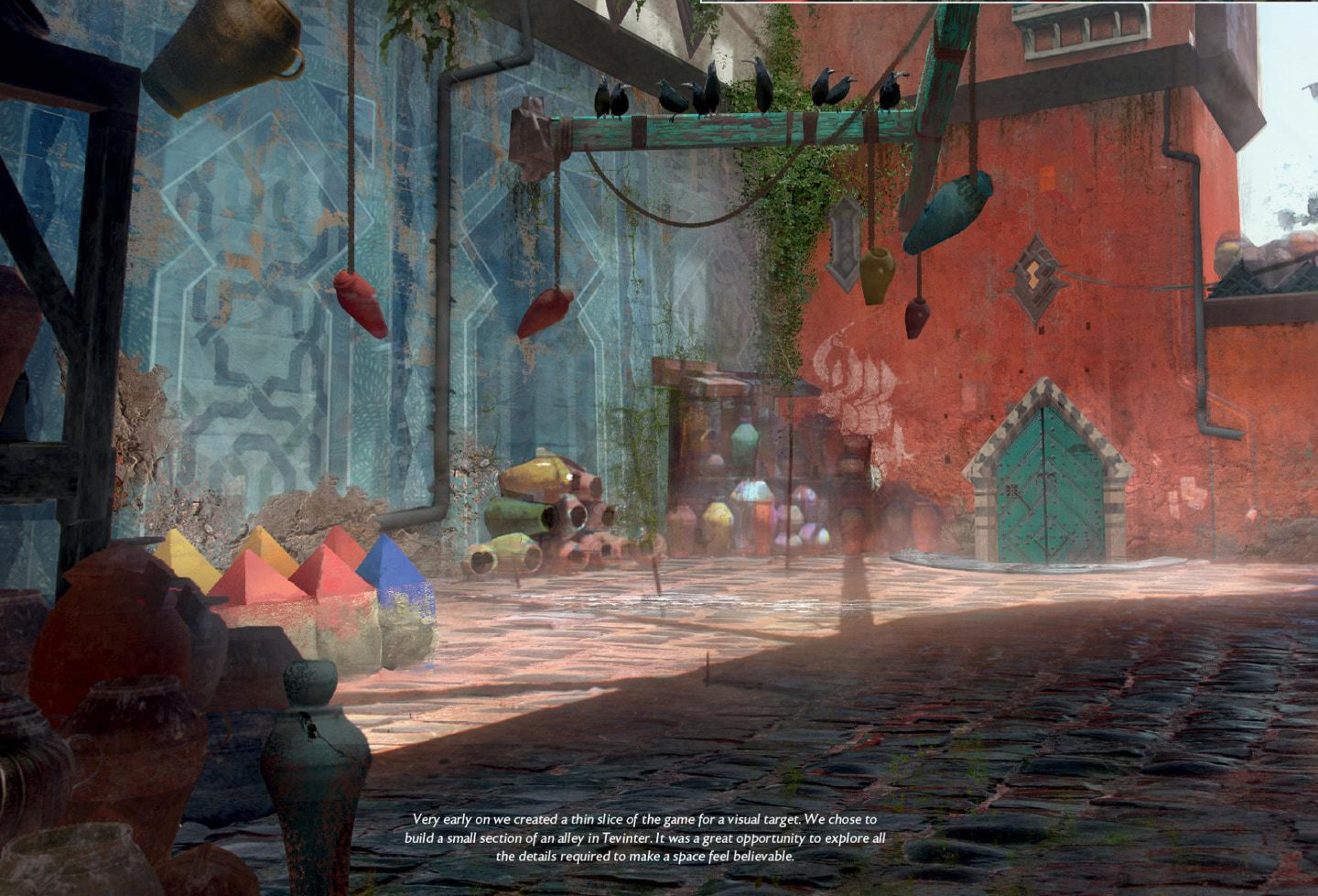
Potters' Path.



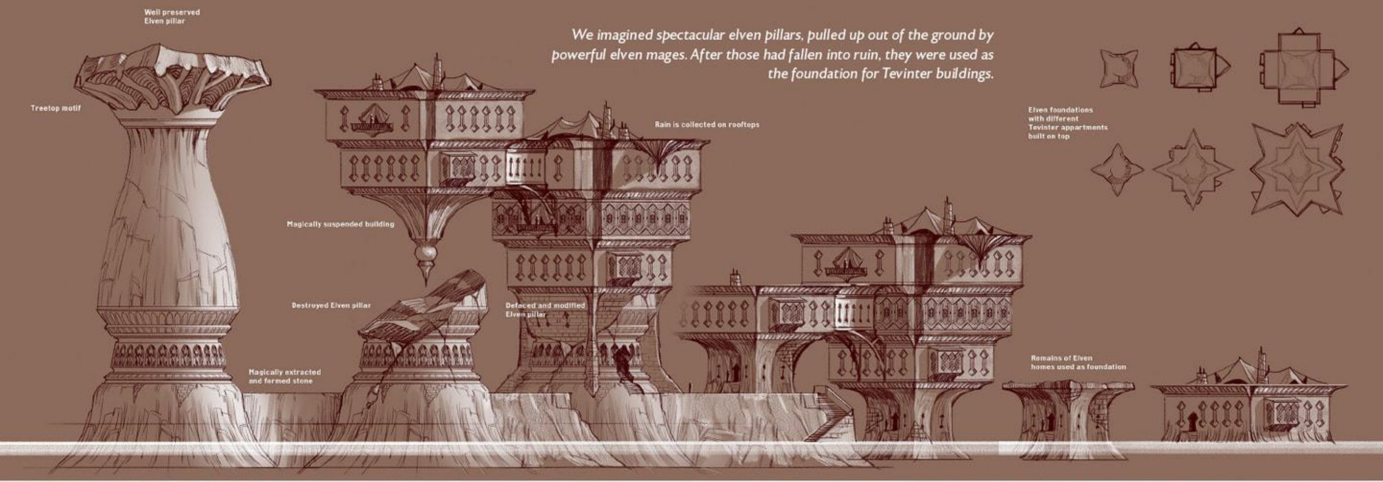
In the early stages, we thought a lot about the layers of Tevinter. We started with the ruins of the elven empire, then built up layer after layer of Tevinter architecture.



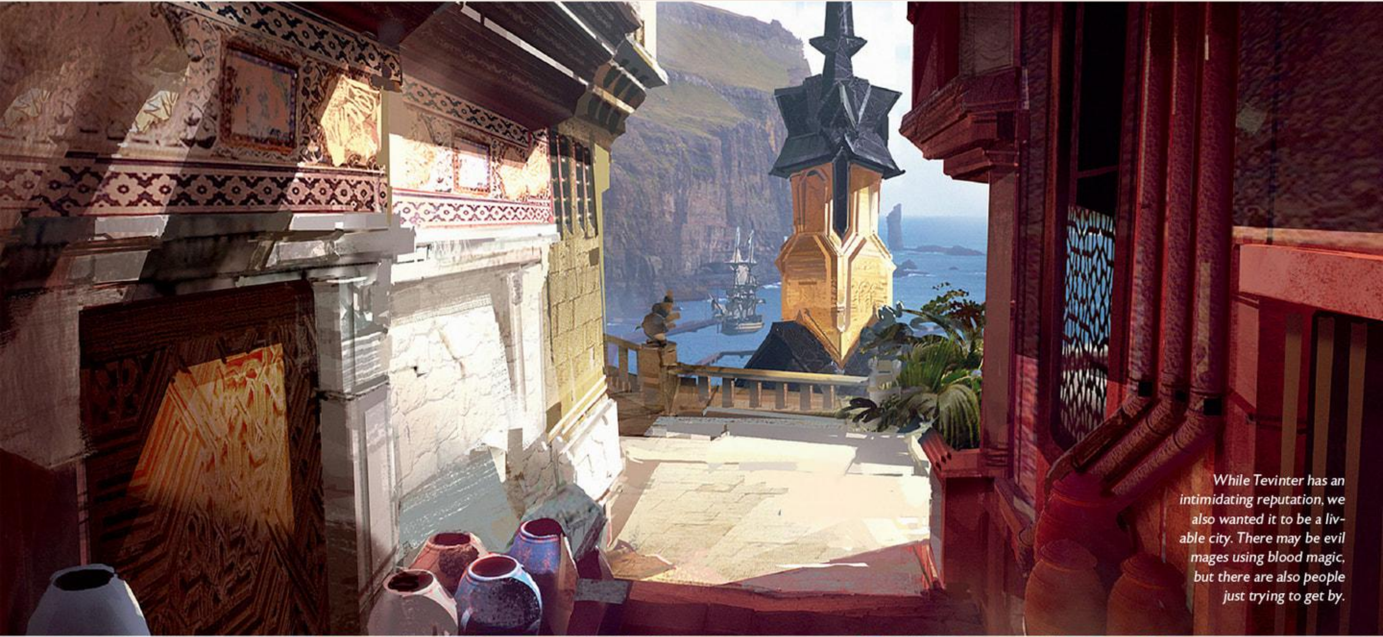
At one point, Minrathous would be occupied by the Antaam instead of the Antivans.



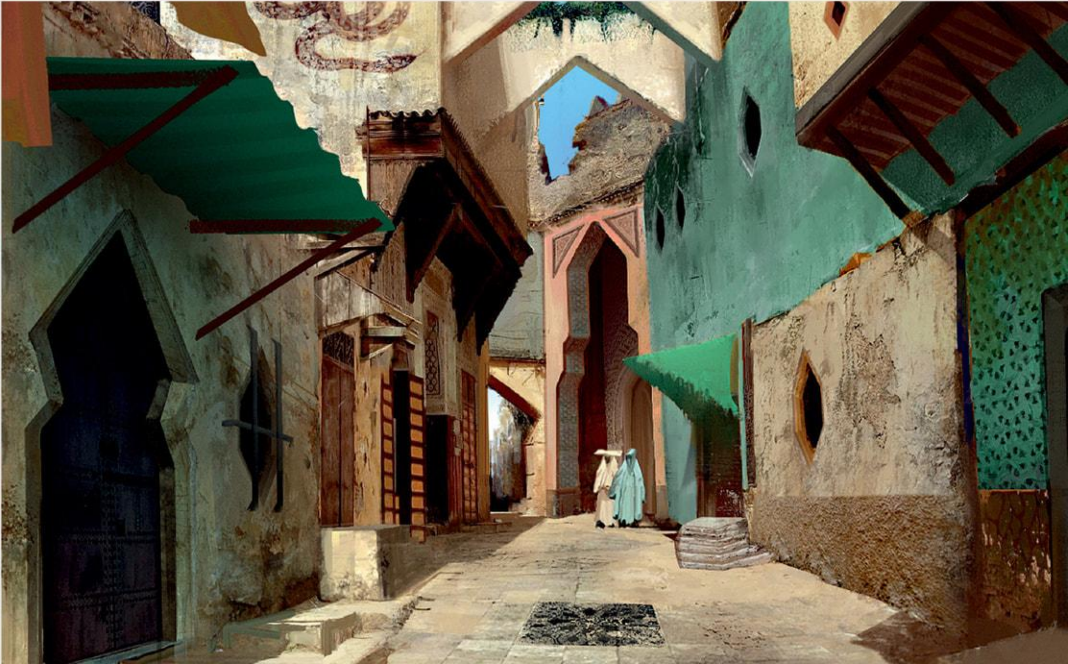
Very early on we created a thin slice of the game for a visual target. We chose to build a small section of an alley in Tevinter. It was a great opportunity to explore all the details required to make a space feel believable.

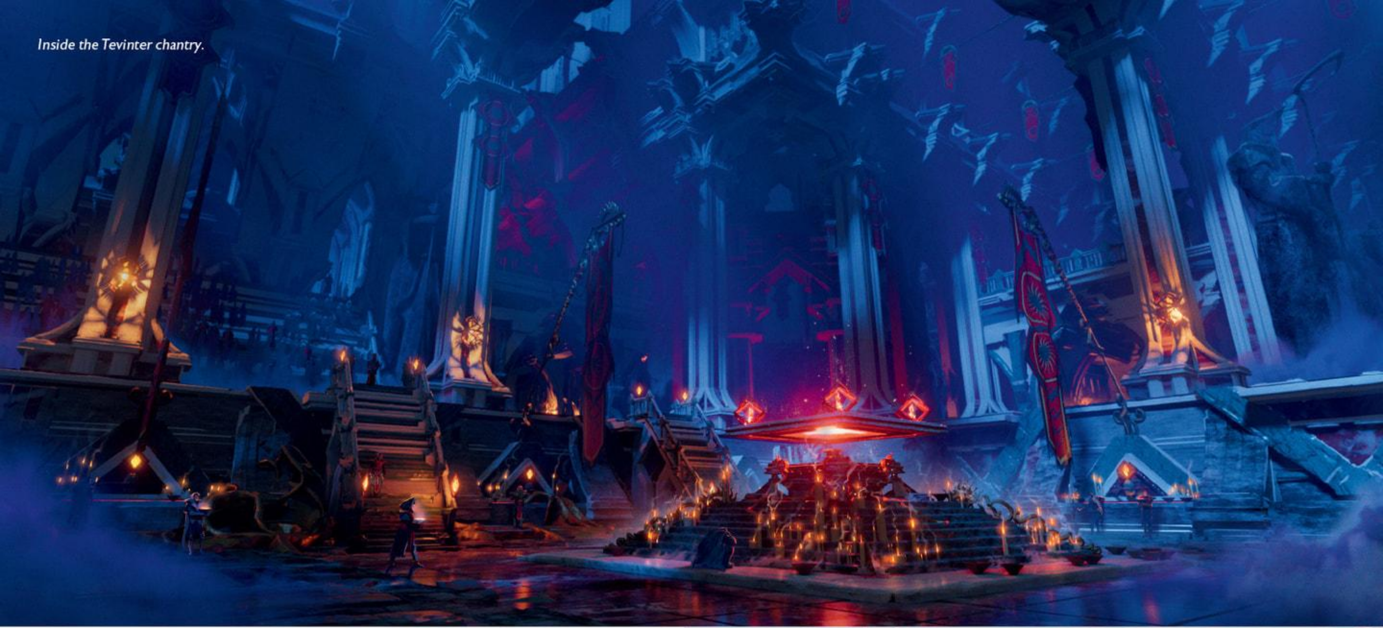

Well preserved
Elven pillar
Treetop motif
Magically suspended building
Destroyed Elven pillar
Magically extracted
and formed stone
Defaced and modified
Elven pillar
Rain is collected on rooftops
Elven foundations
with different
Tevinter appartments
built on top
Remains of Elven
homes used as foundation

We imagined spectacular elven pillars, pulled up out of the ground by powerful elven mages. After those had fallen into ruin, they were used as the foundation for Tevinter buildings.



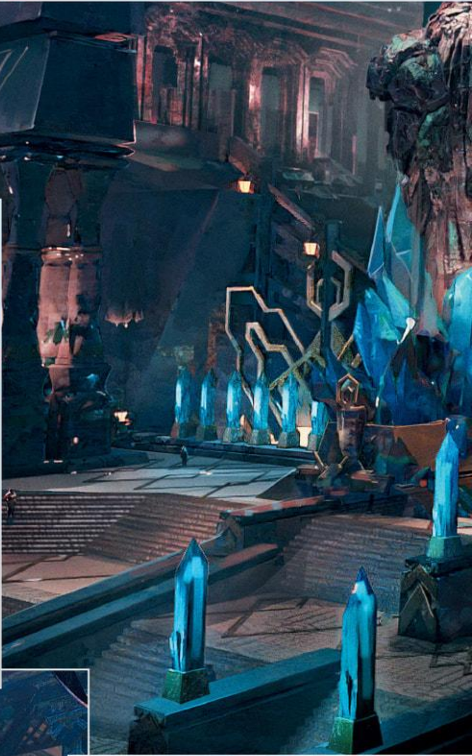
While Tevinter has an intimidating reputation, we also wanted it to be a livable city. There may be evil mages using blood magic, but there are also people just trying to get by.

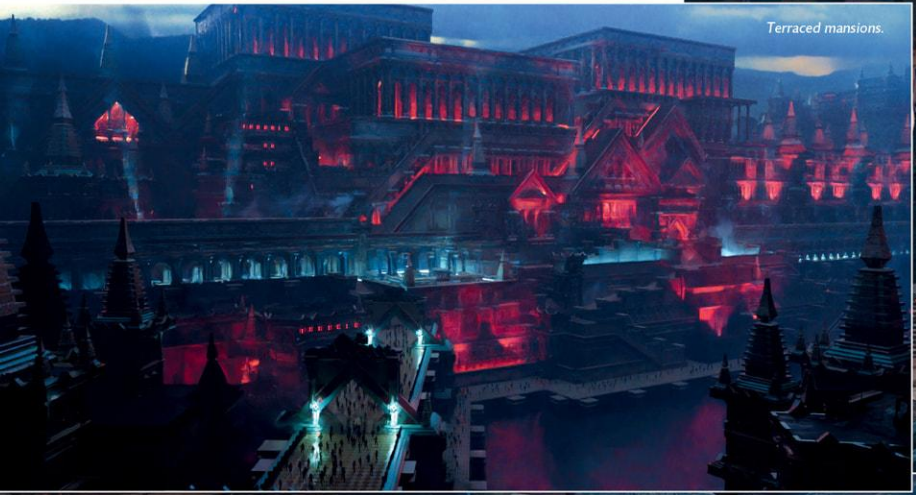


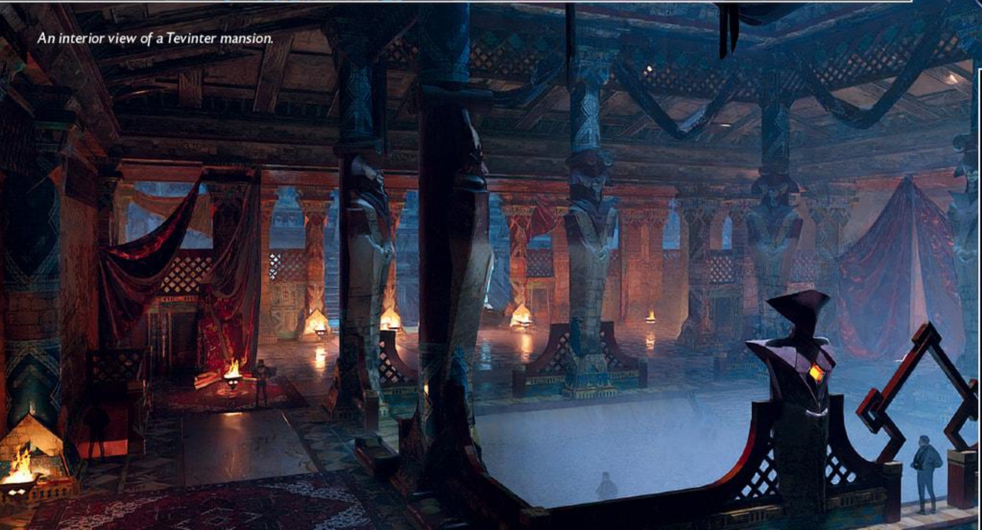

Inside the Tevinter chantry.

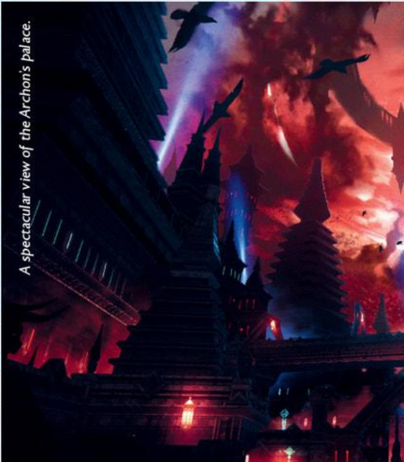
HIGH TOWN

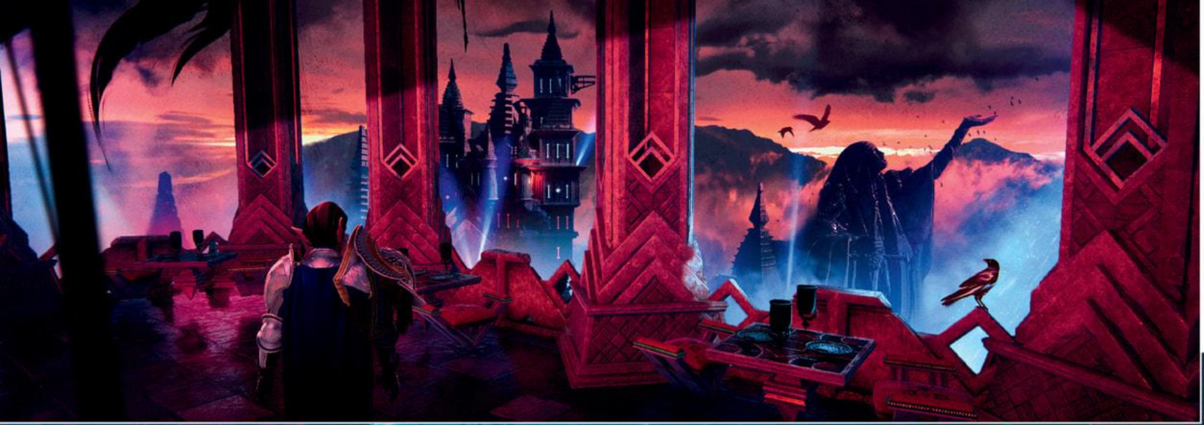
Home to the elite of Minrathous. Here the magic is on full display.



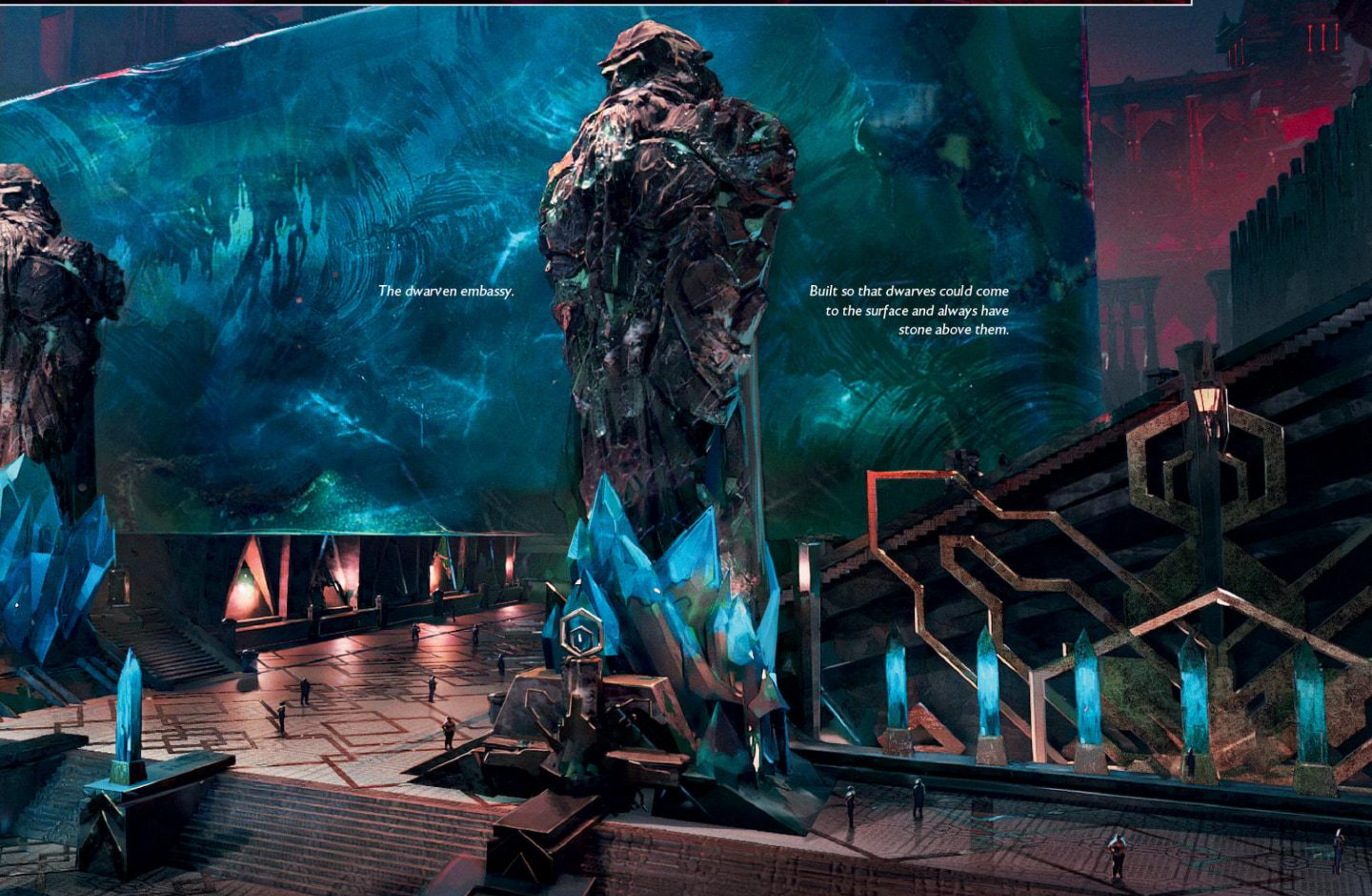

Terraced mansions.


An interior view of a Tevinter mansion.


A spectacular view of the Archon's palace.

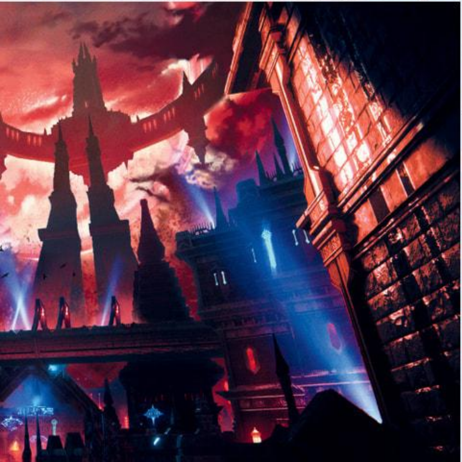


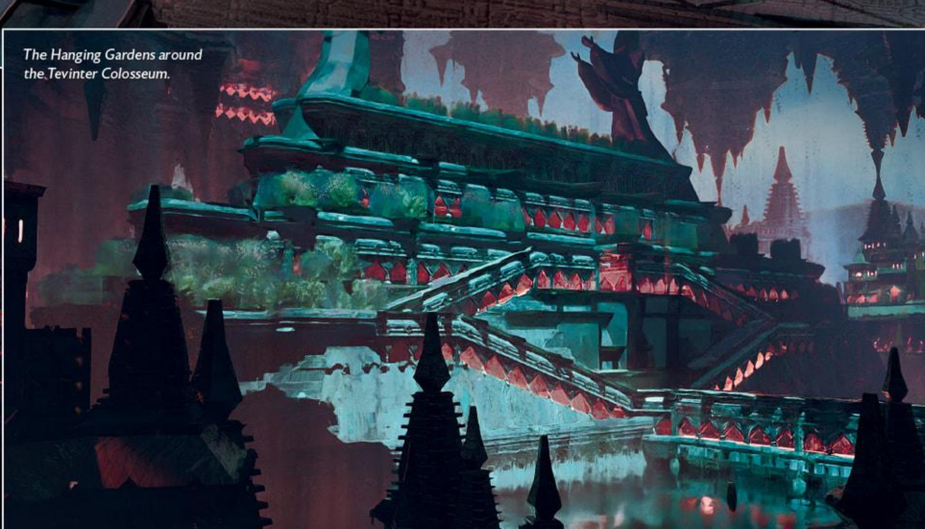
The views from High Town are expansive.



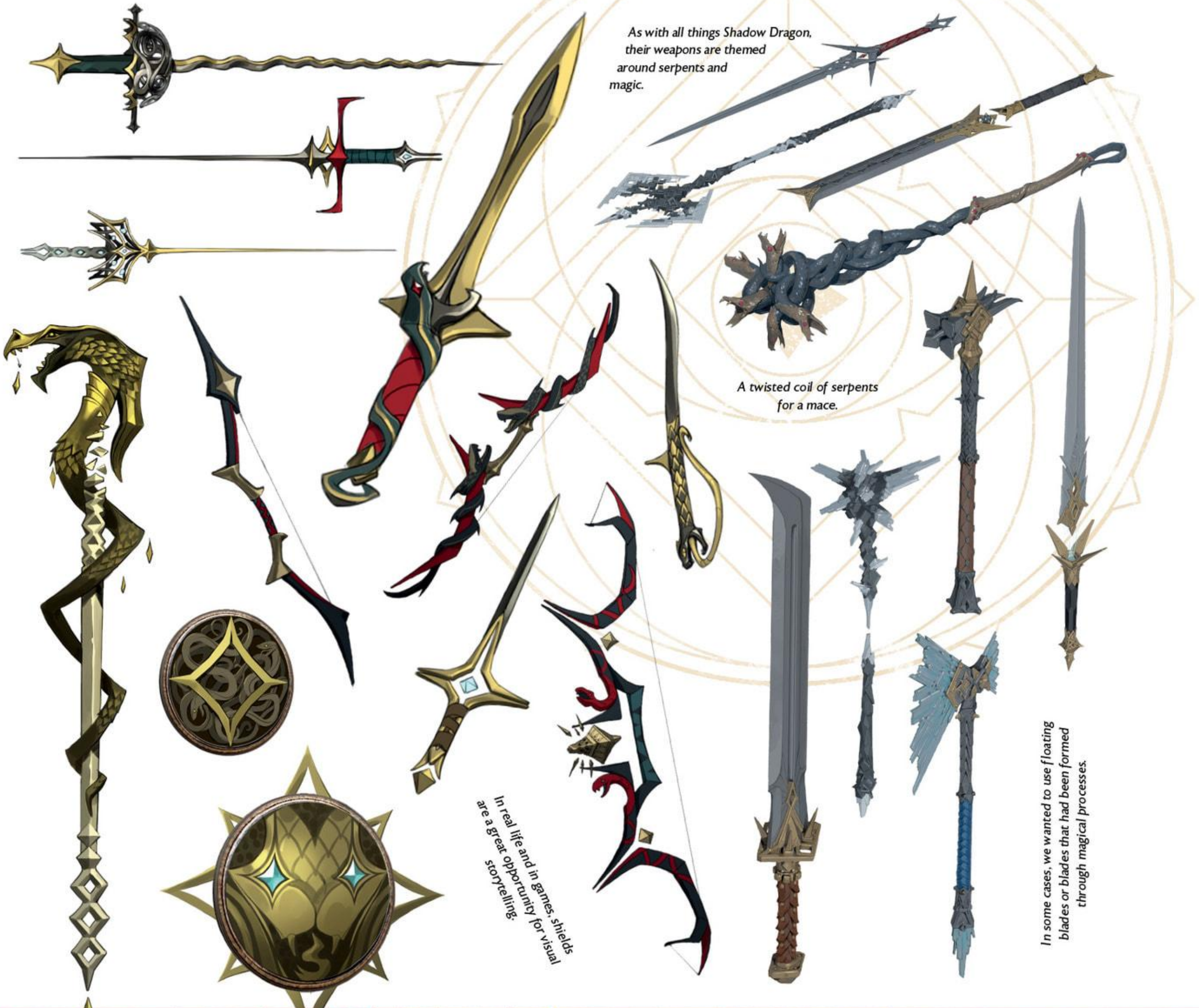
The dwarven embassy.

Built so that dwarves could come to the surface and always have stone above them.





The Hanging Gardens around the Tevinter Colosseum.

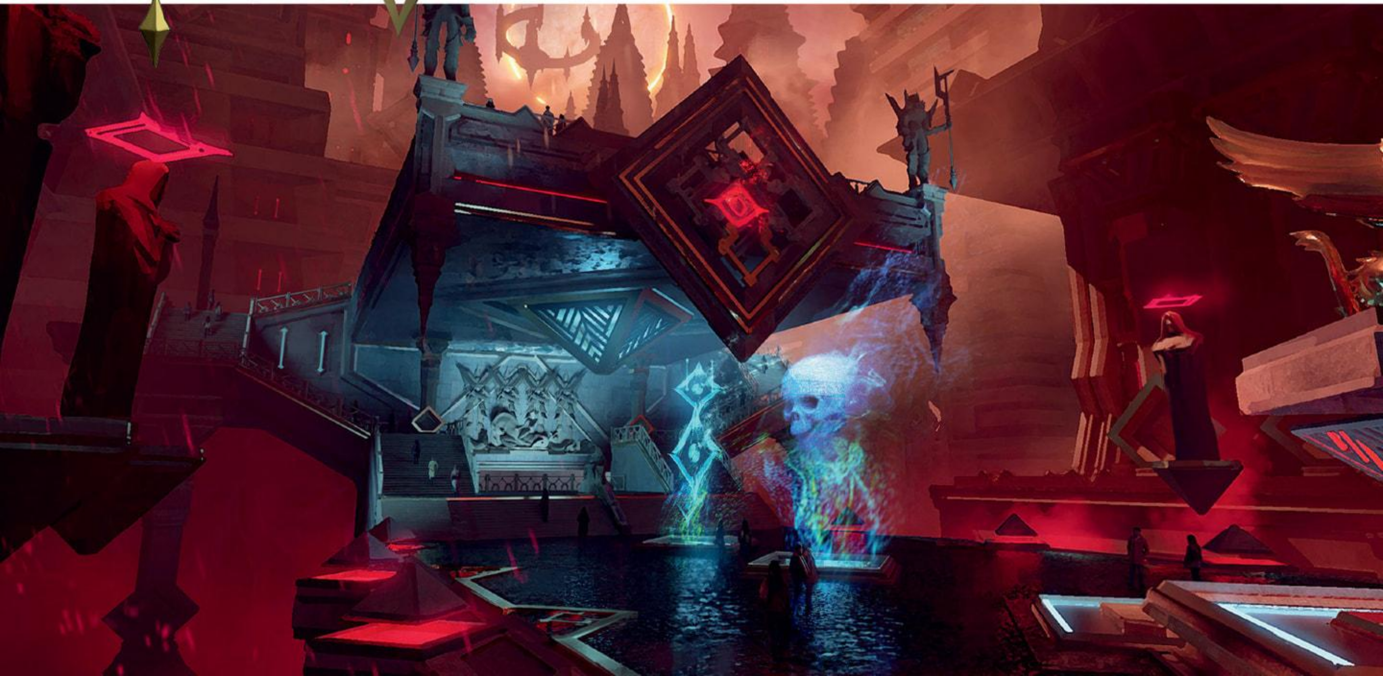


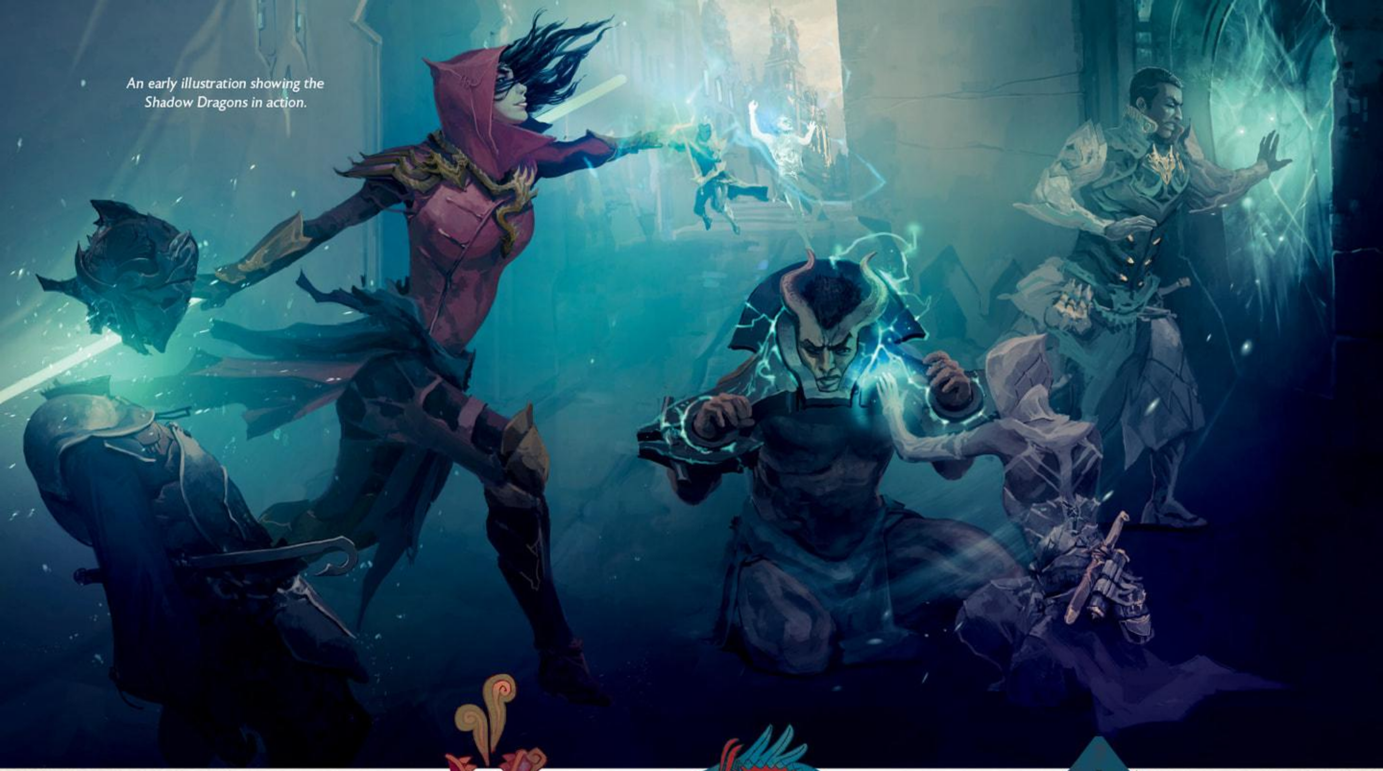
As with all things Shadow Dragon, their weapons are themed around serpents and magic.

A twisted coil of serpents for a mace.

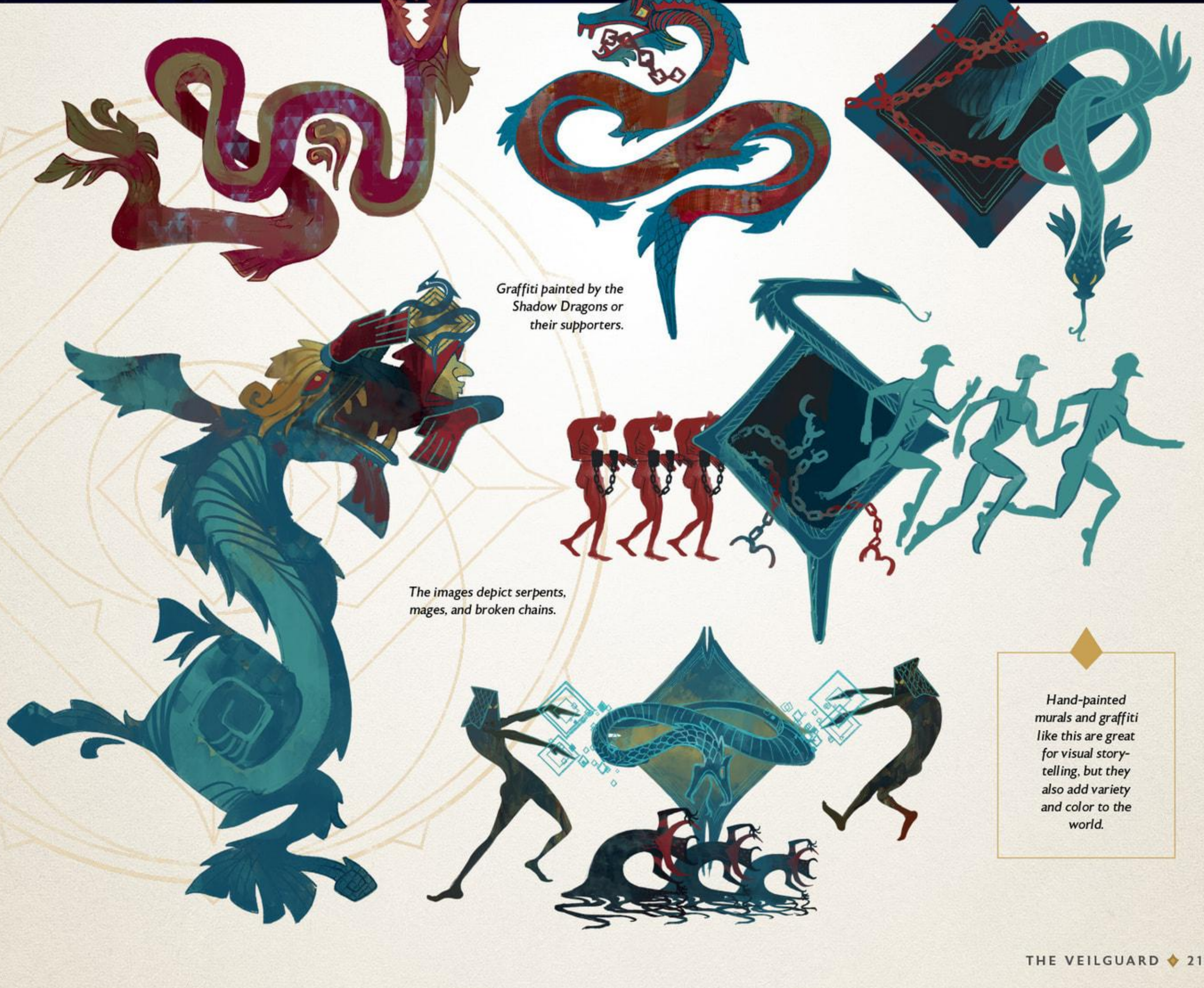
In real life and in games, shields are a great opportunity for visual storytelling.

In some cases, we wanted to use floating blades or blades that had been formed through magical processes.





An early illustration showing the Shadow Dragons in action.

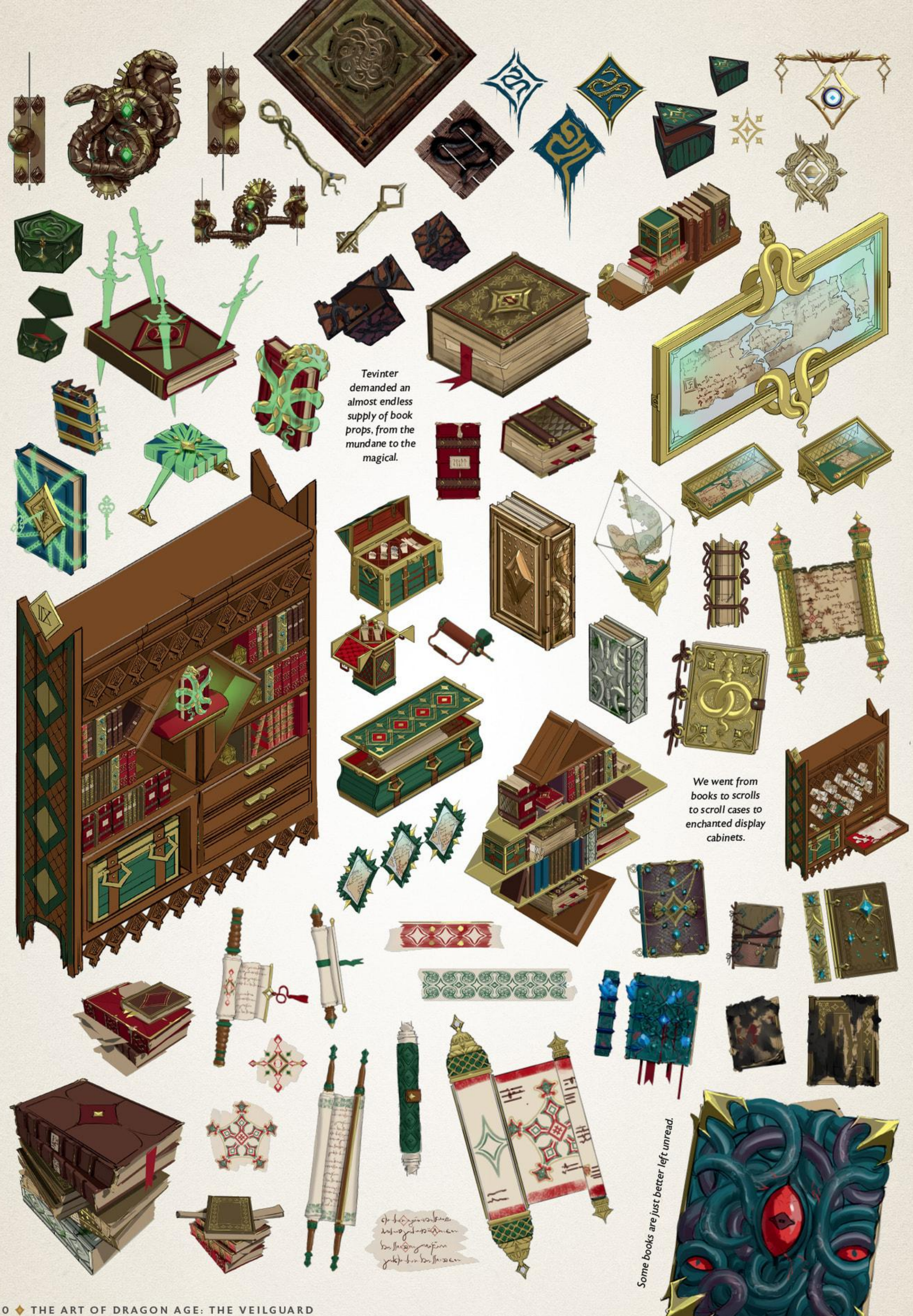


Graffiti painted by the Shadow Dragons or their supporters.

The images depict serpents, mages, and broken chains.

◆

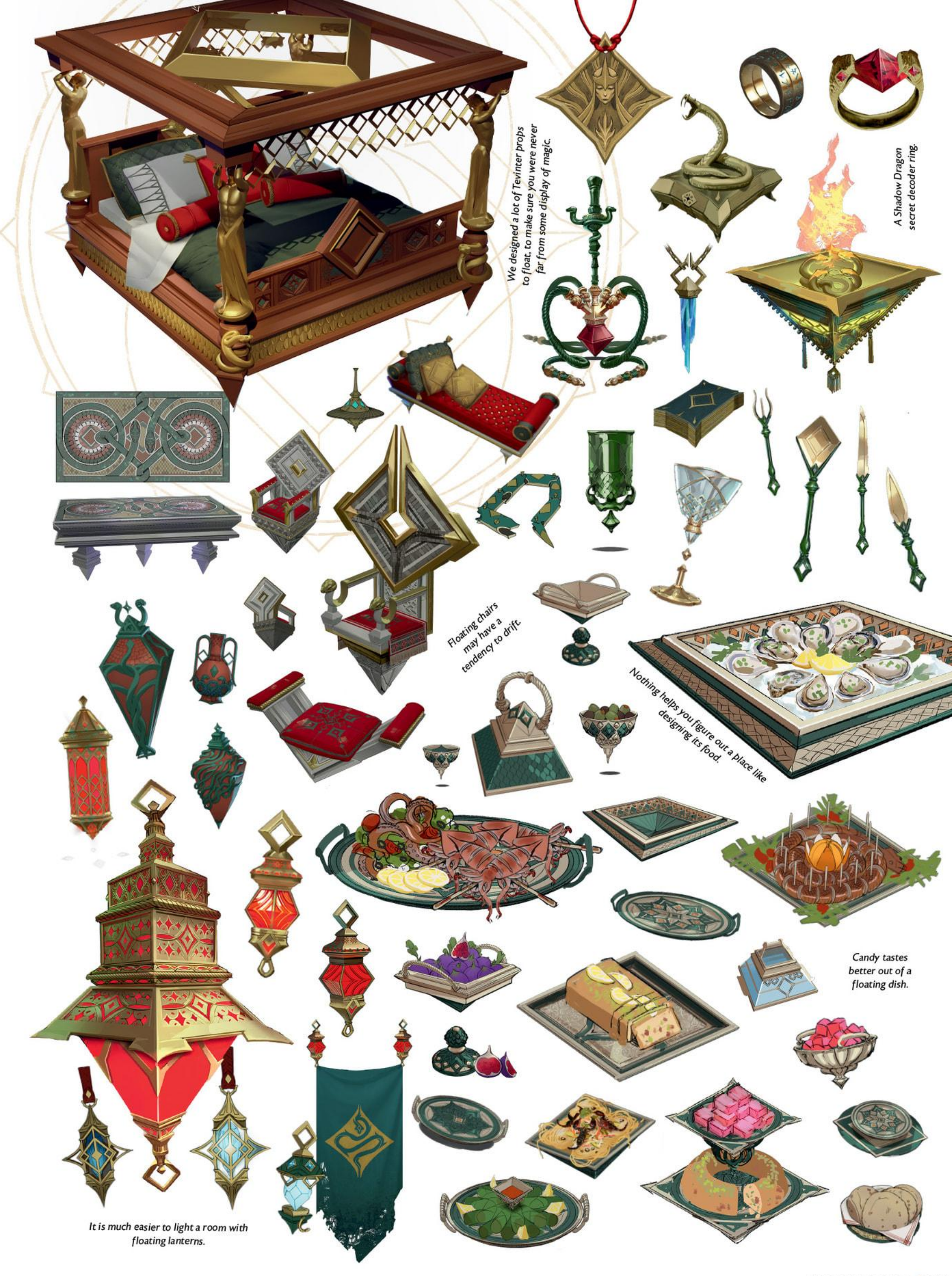
Hand-painted murals and graffiti like this are great for visual storytelling, but they also add variety and color to the world.



Tevinter demanded an almost endless supply of book props, from the mundane to the magical.

We went from books to scrolls to scroll cases to enchanted display cabinets.

Some books are just better left unread.



We designed a lot of Tevinter props to float, to make sure you were never far from some display of magic.

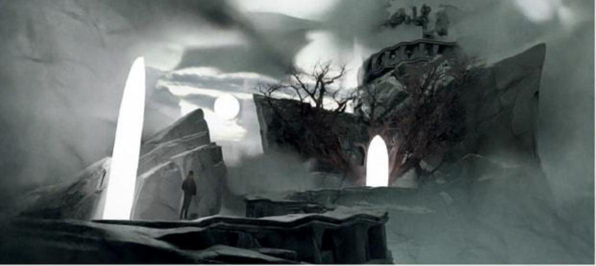
A Shadow Dragon secret decoder ring.

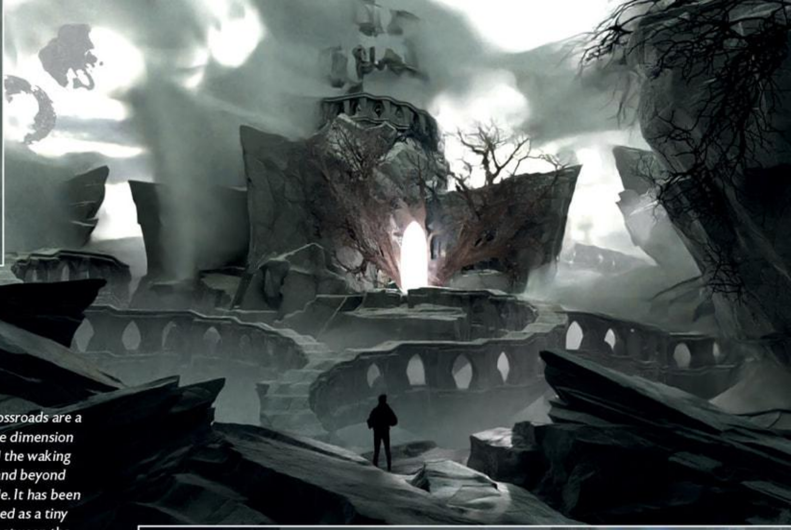
Floating chairs may have a tendency to drift.

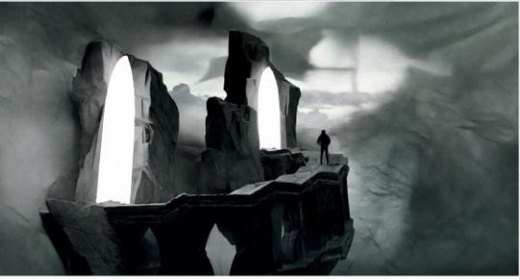
Nothing helps you figure out a place like designing its food.

Candy tastes better out of a floating dish.

It is much easier to light a room with floating lanterns.



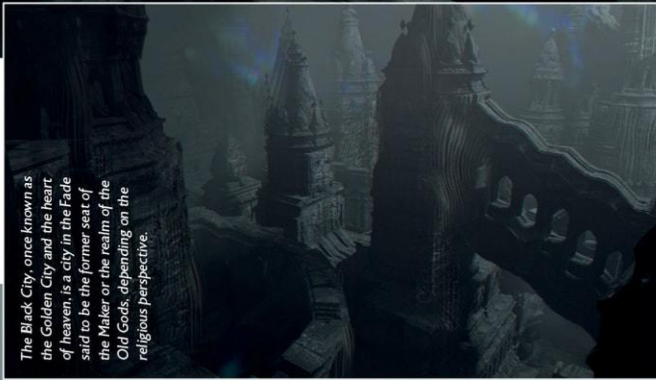




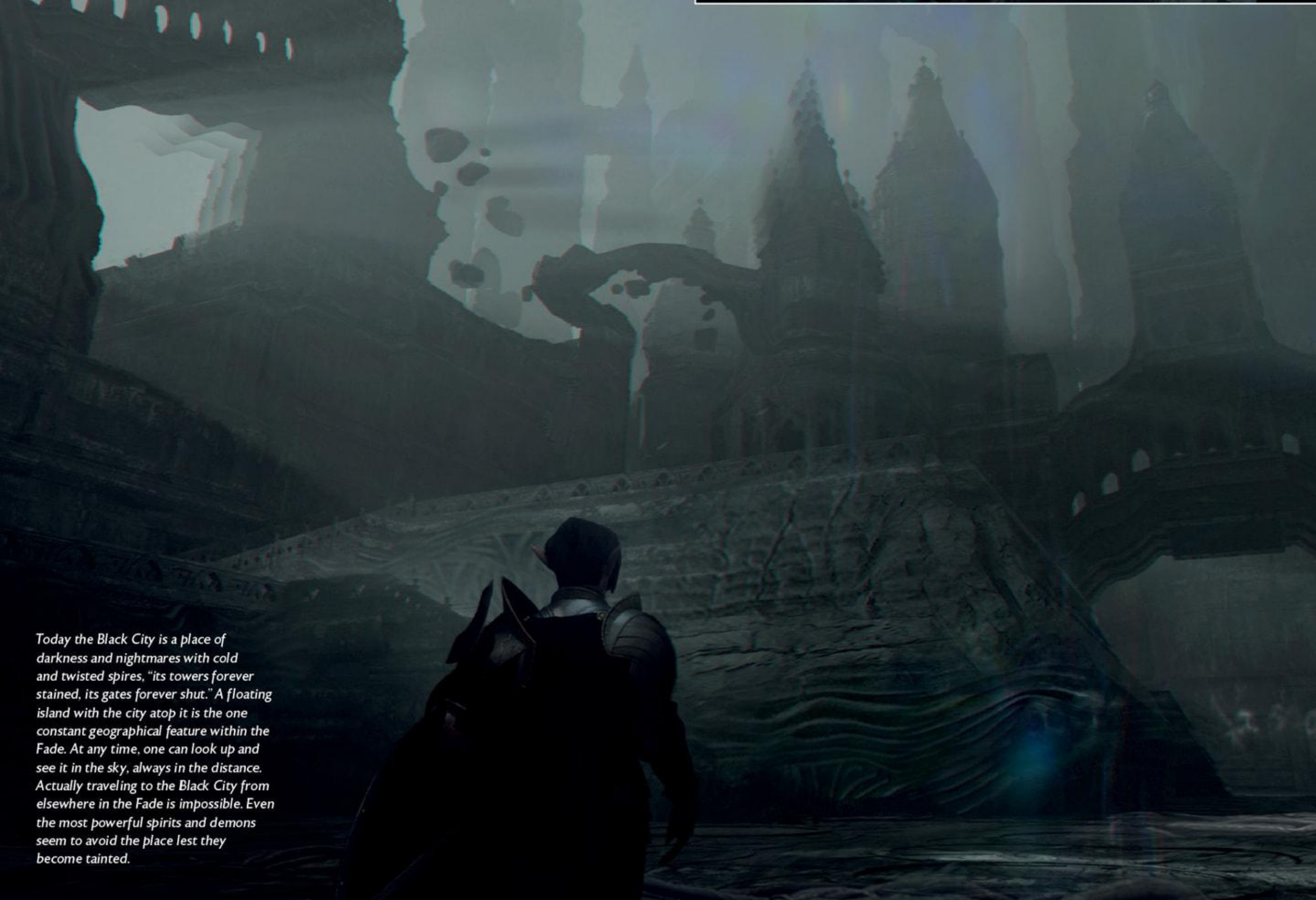
The Crossroads are a separate dimension beyond the waking world and beyond the Fade. It has been described as a tiny world between the eluvians.

THE FADE

The Fade is the scrap heap Solas created when he made the wall of the Veil and threw all the magic in Thedas over it. It is inhabited by magical creatures, spirits, and demons. It is shaped by the dreams of people in Thedas. Some locations in the Fade seem coherent, resembling places from the other side of the Veil. Others are chaotic abstractions.



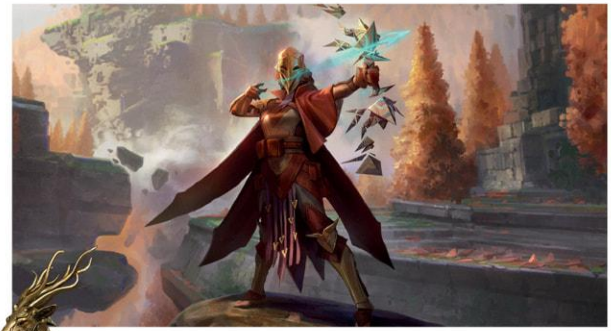
The Black City, once known as the Golden City and the heart of heaven, is a city in the Fade said to be the former seat of the Maker or the realm of the Old Gods, depending on the religious perspective.

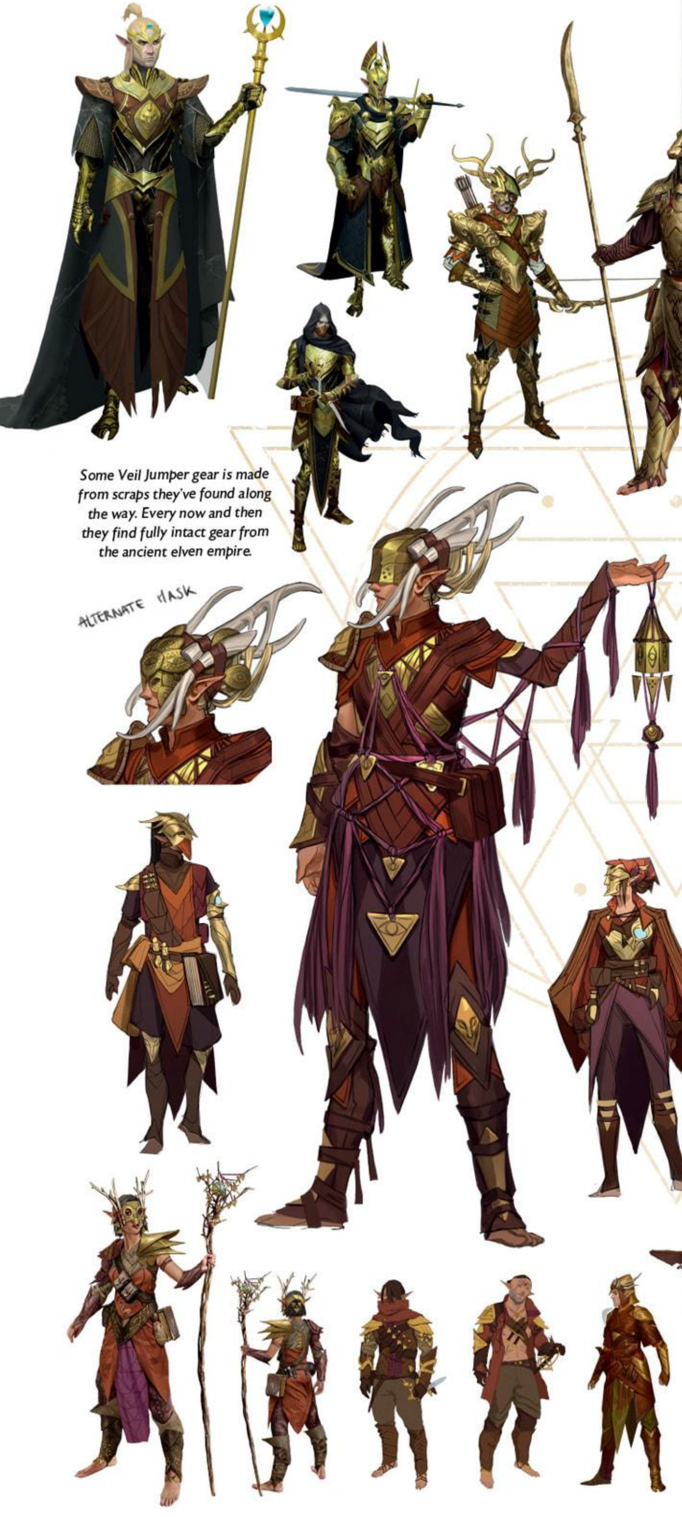


Today the Black City is a place of darkness and nightmares with cold and twisted spires, "its towers forever stained, its gates forever shut." A floating island with the city atop it is the one constant geographical feature within the Fade. At any time, one can look up and see it in the sky, always in the distance. Actually traveling to the Black City from elsewhere in the Fade is impossible. Even the most powerful spirits and demons seem to avoid the place lest they become tainted.

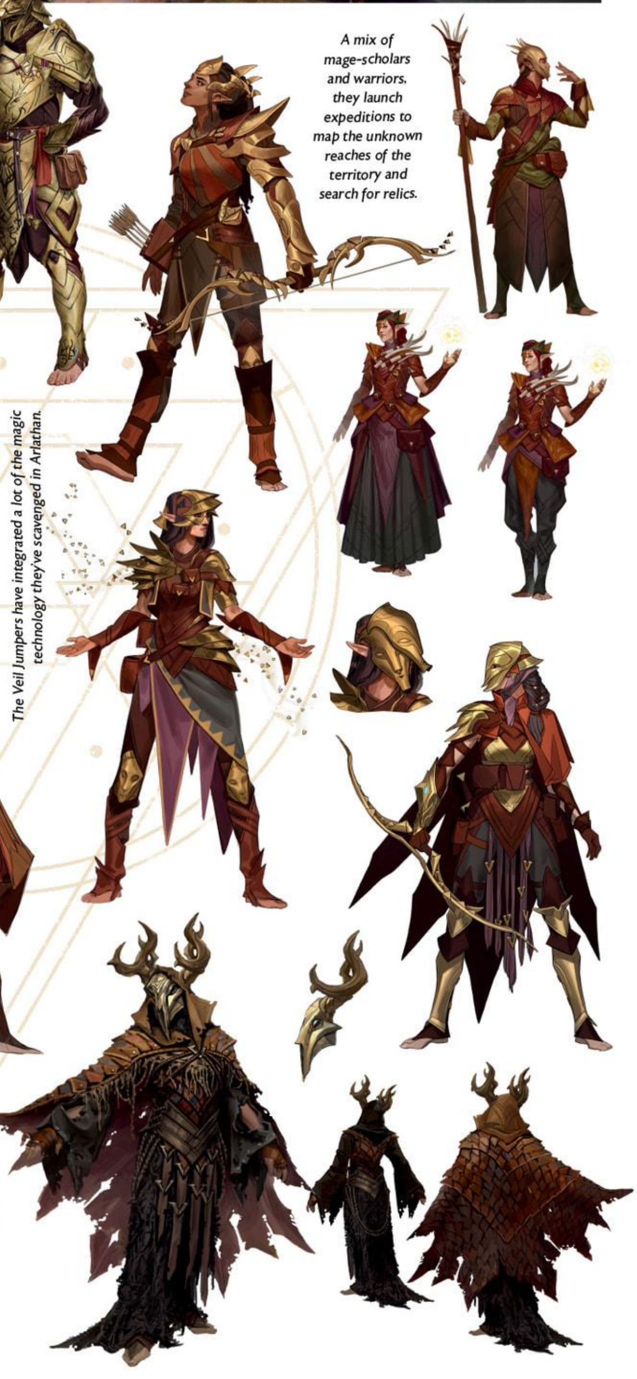
VEIL JUMPERS

Ancient magic awakens! Arcane powers are spinning out of control! Mysteries abound! A fabled lost kingdom now stirs with dreadful monsters and strange conjurations spawned by the dreams of mad elven gods! Who dares brave the uncharted depths of Arlathan Forest to confront the dangers that lie within?





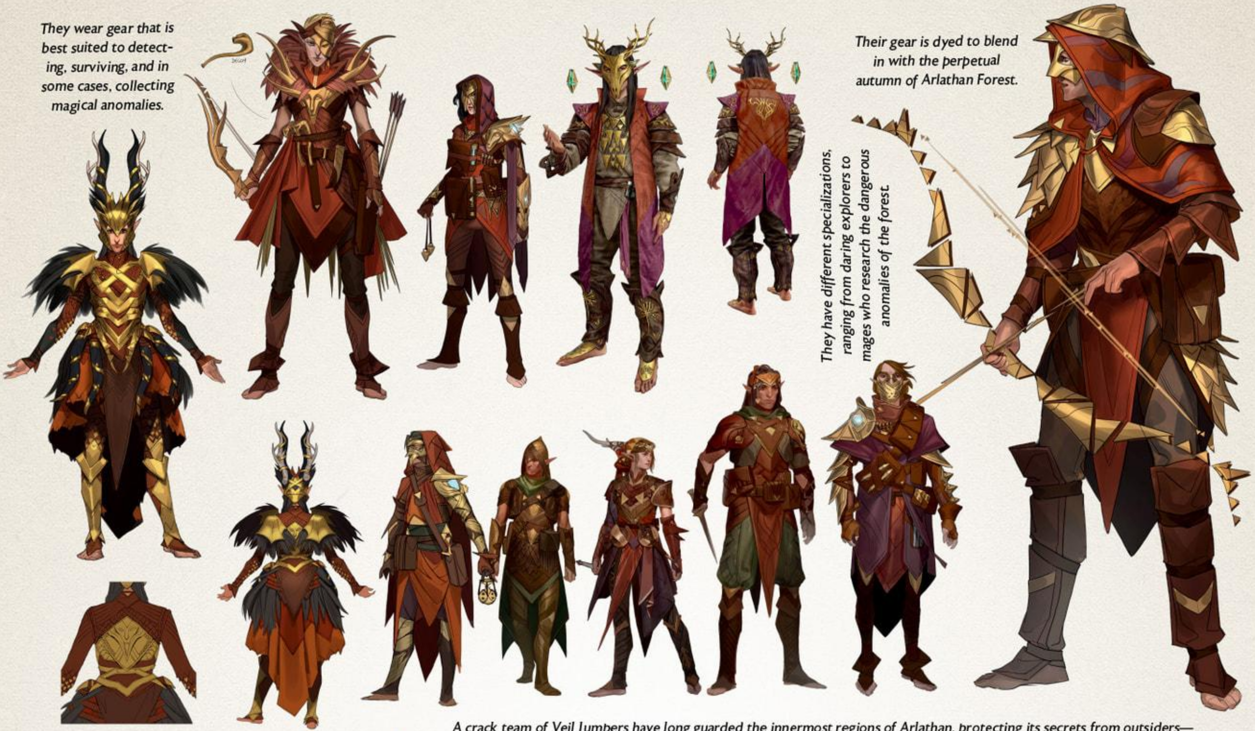
Some Veil Jumper gear is made from scraps they've found along the way. Every now and then they find fully intact gear from the ancient elven empire.



A mix of mage-scholars and warriors, they launch expeditions to map the unknown reaches of the territory and search for relics.

The Veil Jumpers have integrated a lot of the magic technology they've scavenged in Arlathan.

They wear gear that is best suited to detecting, surviving, and in some cases, collecting magical anomalies.

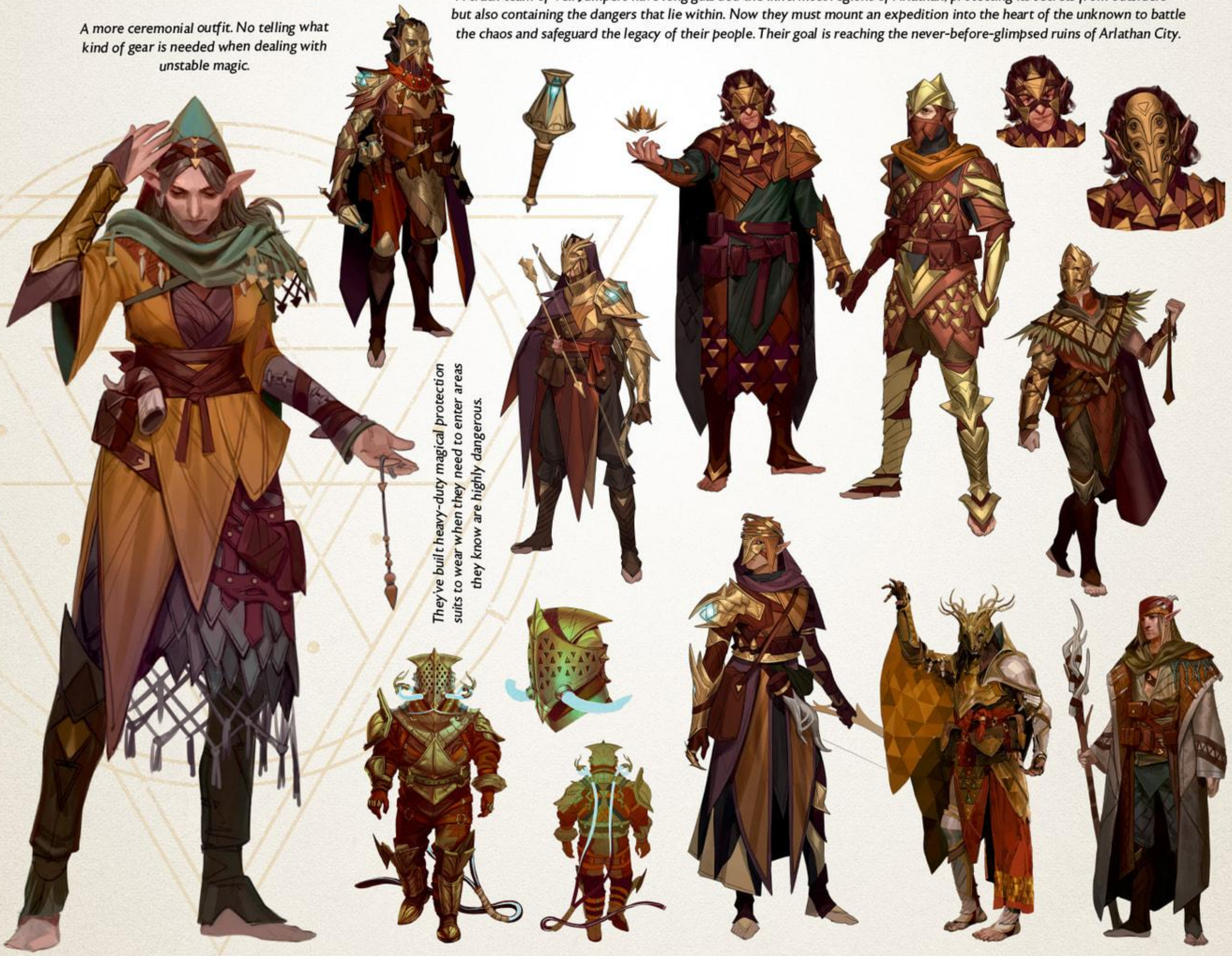


Their gear is dyed to blend in with the perpetual autumn of Arlathan Forest.

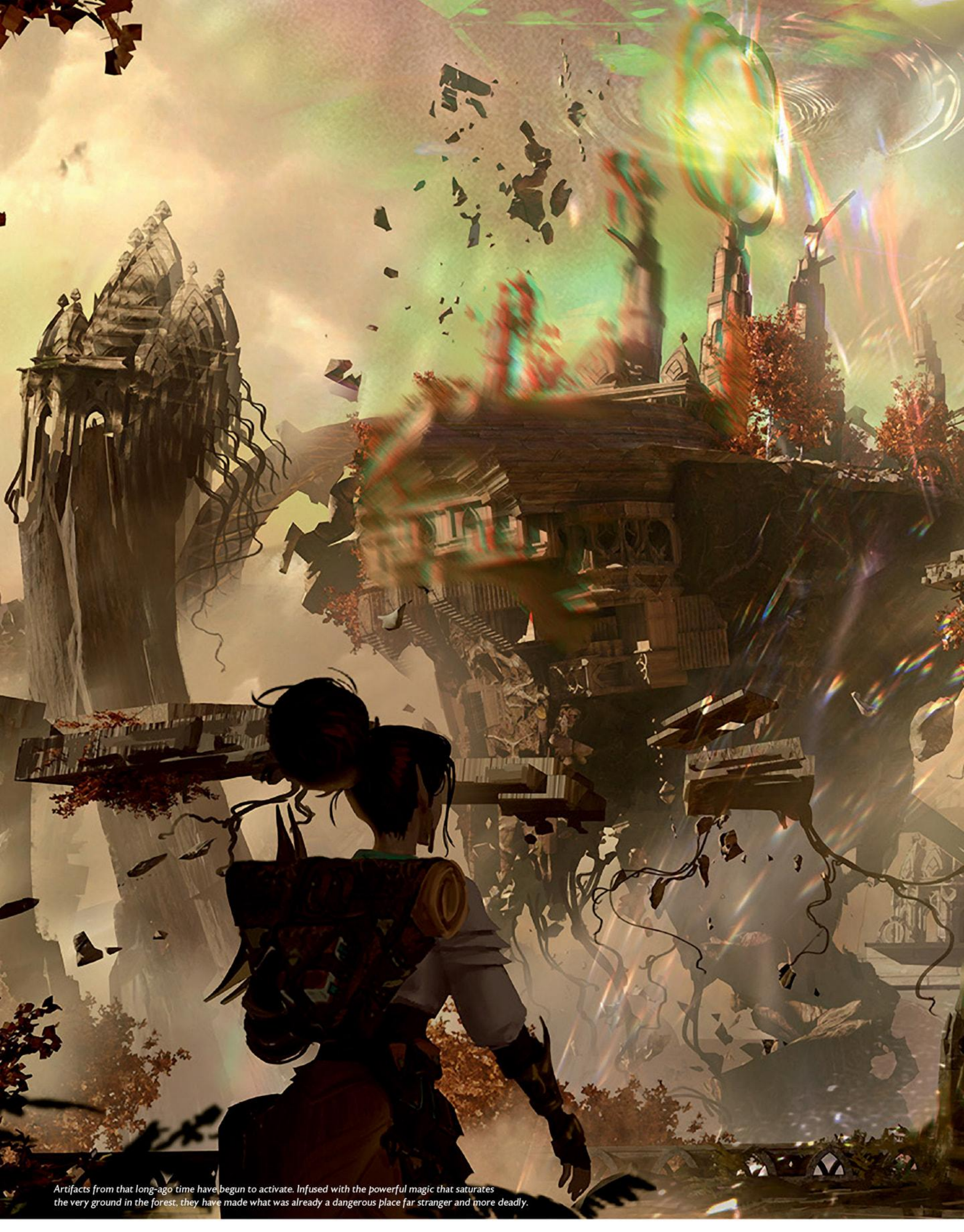
They have different specializations, ranging from daring explorers to mages who research the dangerous anomalies of the forest.

A crack team of Veil Jumpers have long guarded the innermost regions of Arlathan, protecting its secrets from outsiders—but also containing the dangers that lie within. Now they must mount an expedition into the heart of the unknown to battle the chaos and safeguard the legacy of their people. Their goal is reaching the never-before-glimpsed ruins of Arlathan City.

A more ceremonial outfit. No telling what kind of gear is needed when dealing with unstable magic.



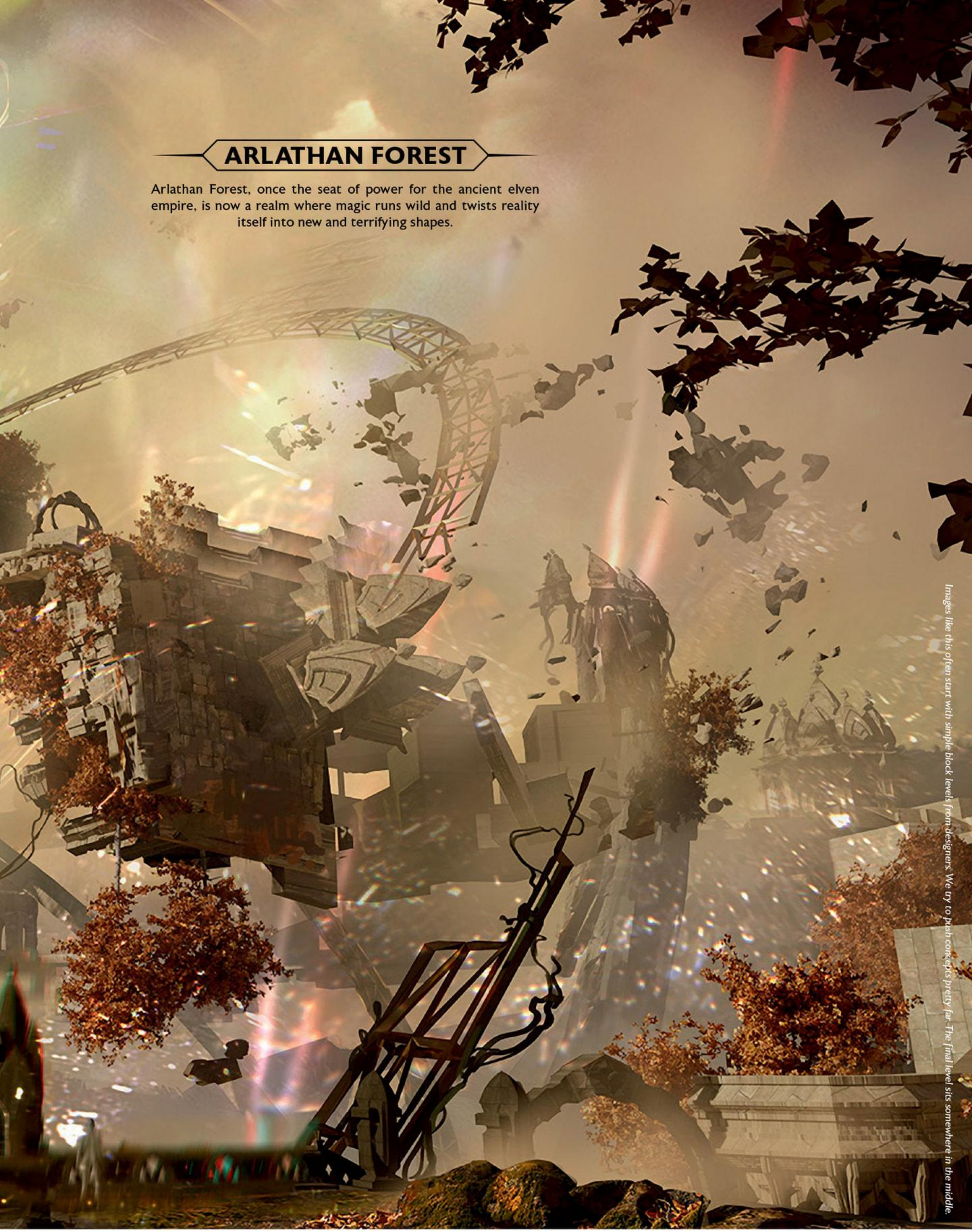
They've built heavy-duty magical protection suits to wear when they need to enter areas they know are highly dangerous.



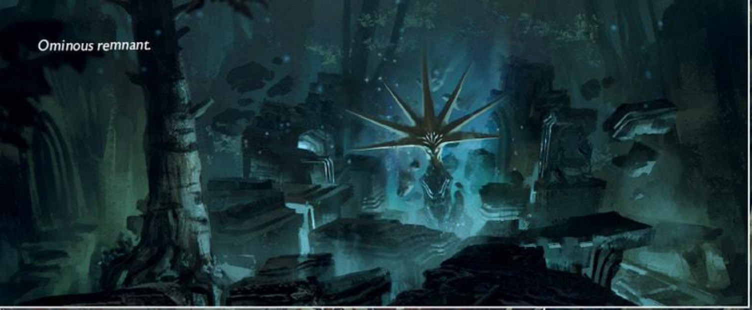
Artifacts from that long-ago time have begun to activate. Infused with the powerful magic that saturates the very ground in the forest, they have made what was already a dangerous place far stranger and more deadly.

ARLATHAN FOREST

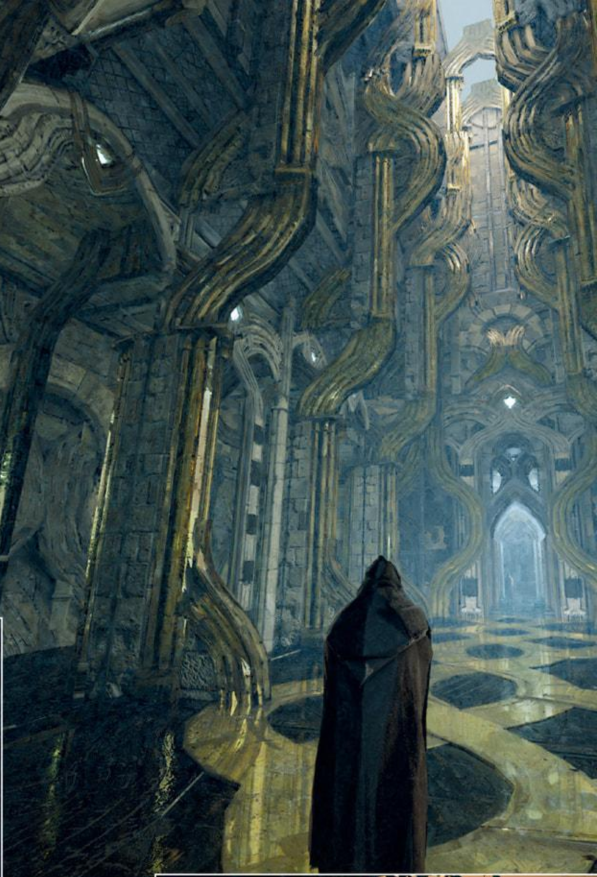
Arlathan Forest, once the seat of power for the ancient elven empire, is now a realm where magic runs wild and twists reality itself into new and terrifying shapes.

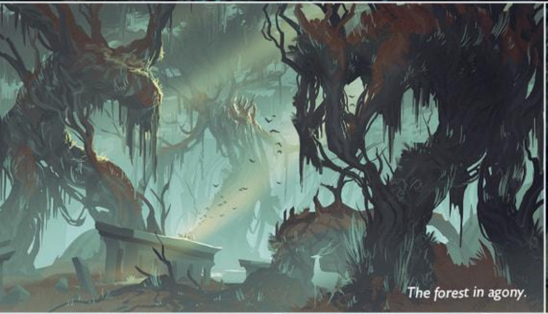


Images like this often start with simple block levels from designers. We try to push concepts pretty far. The final level sits somewhere in the middle.

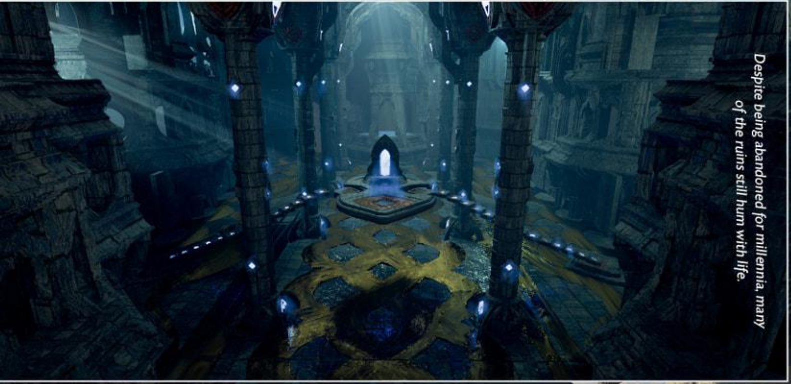


Ominous remnant.

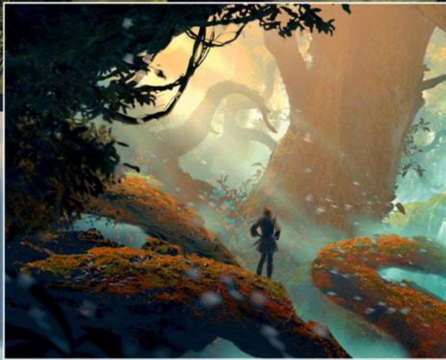




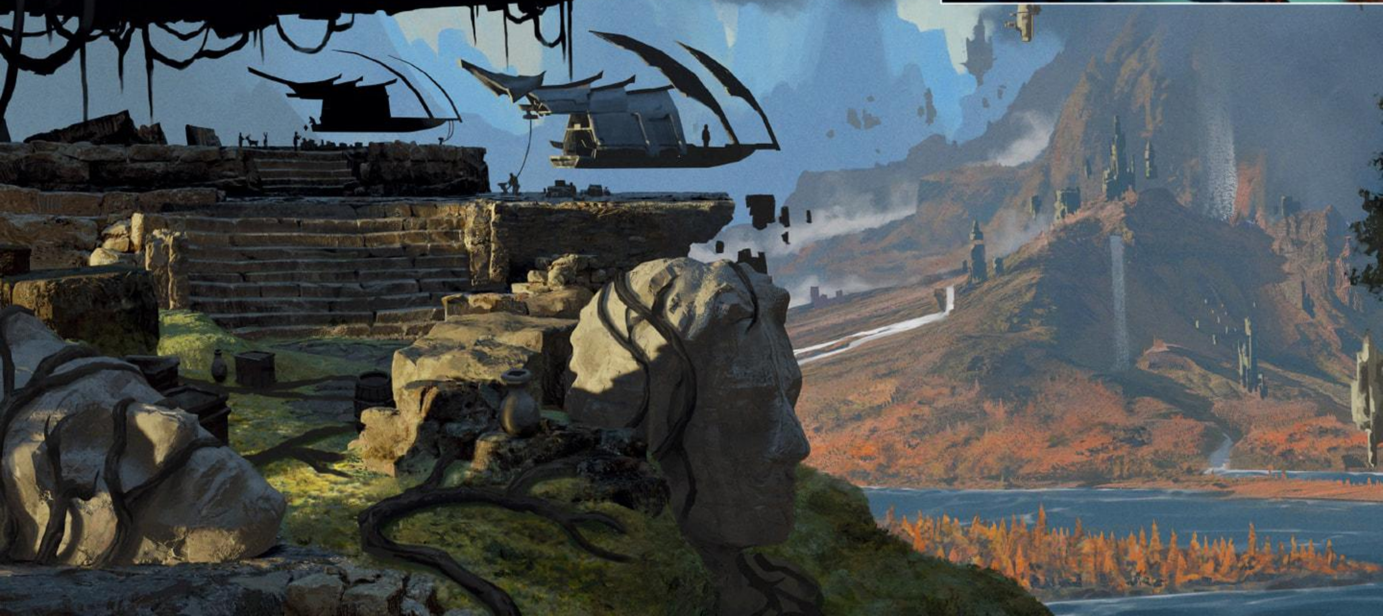
The forest in agony.

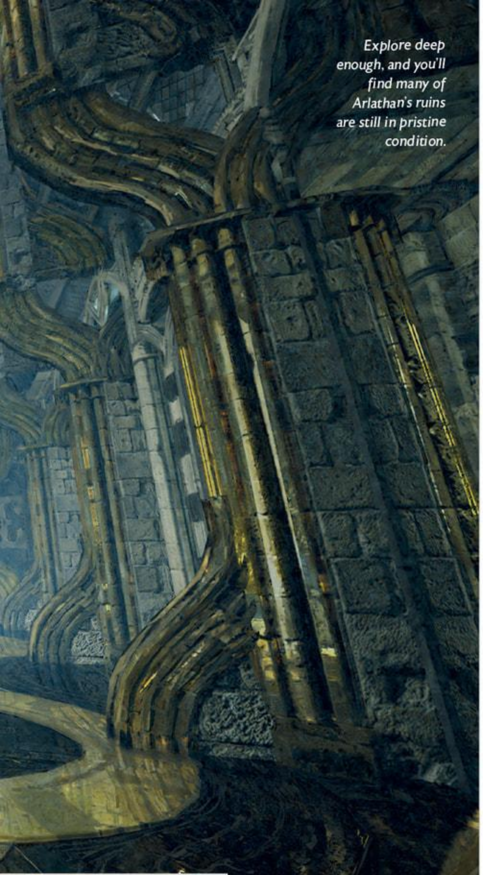


Despite being abandoned for millennia, many of the ruins still hum with life.

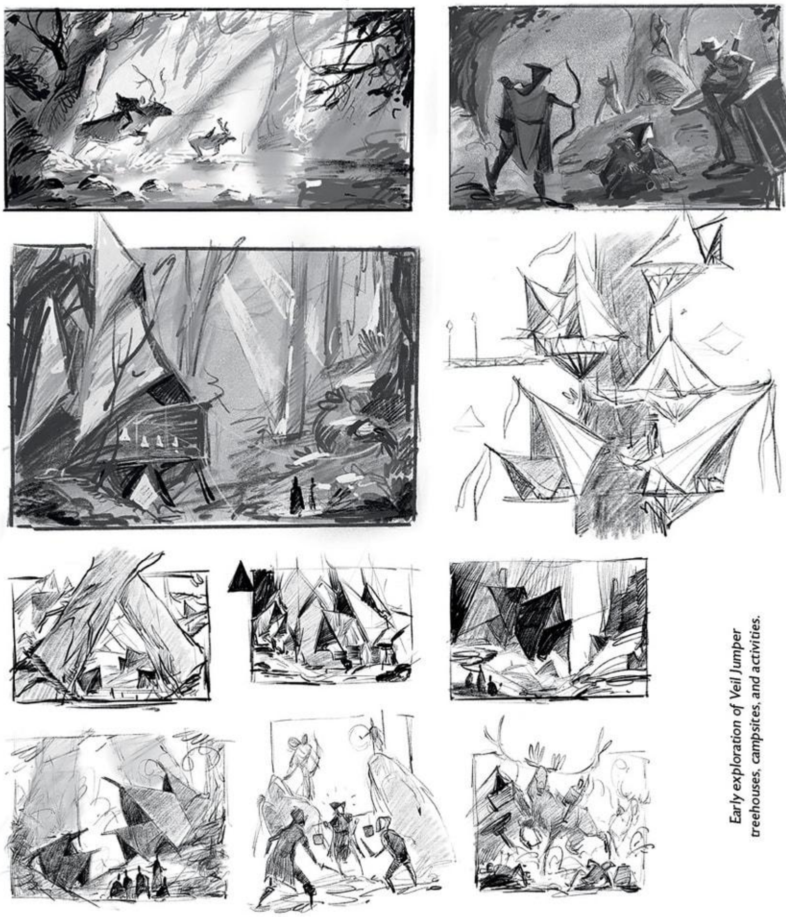


The fallout from the ancient destruction of Arlathan City stirs once more. Magical eddies and vortices long dormant are coming to life, transforming the land into a dangerous territory few dare tread. Even now, after thousands of years, some regions of Arlathan Forest still remain uncharted. Tales of legend say the ruins of the ancient elven capital lie somewhere deep within its borders . . .

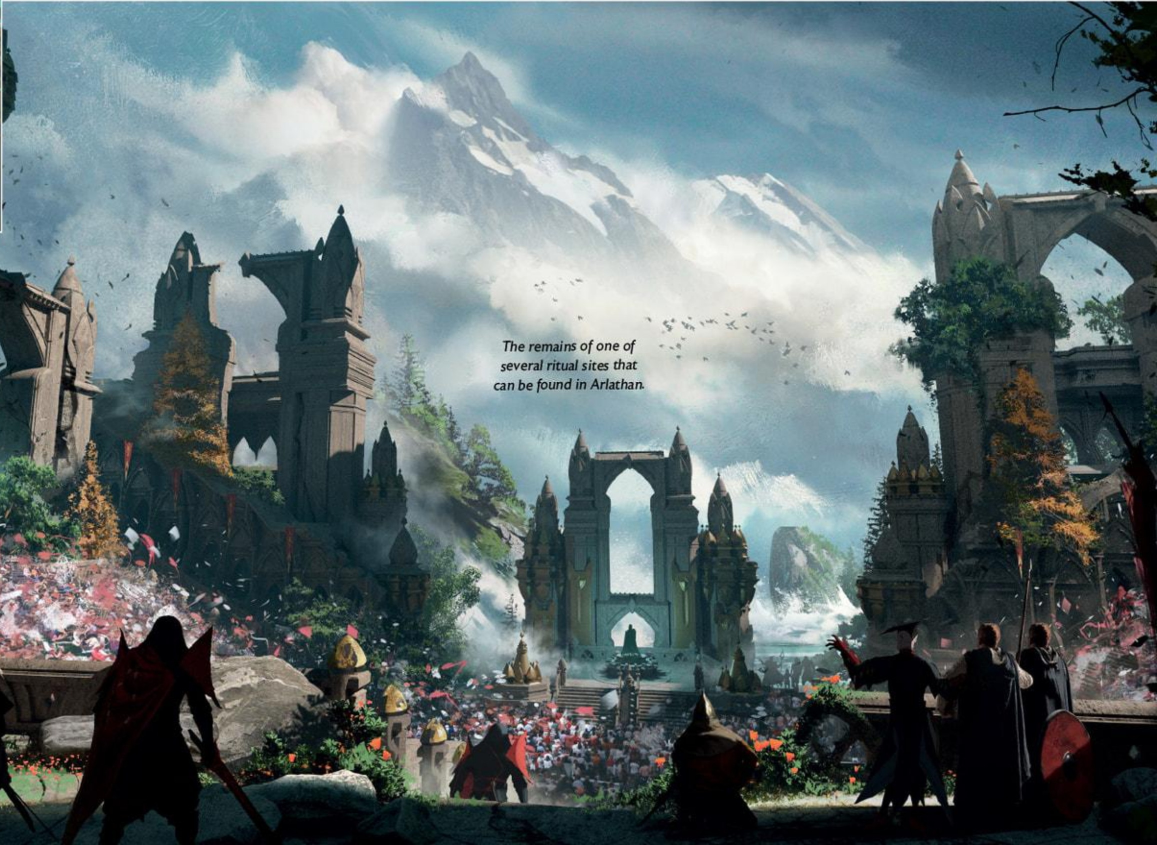




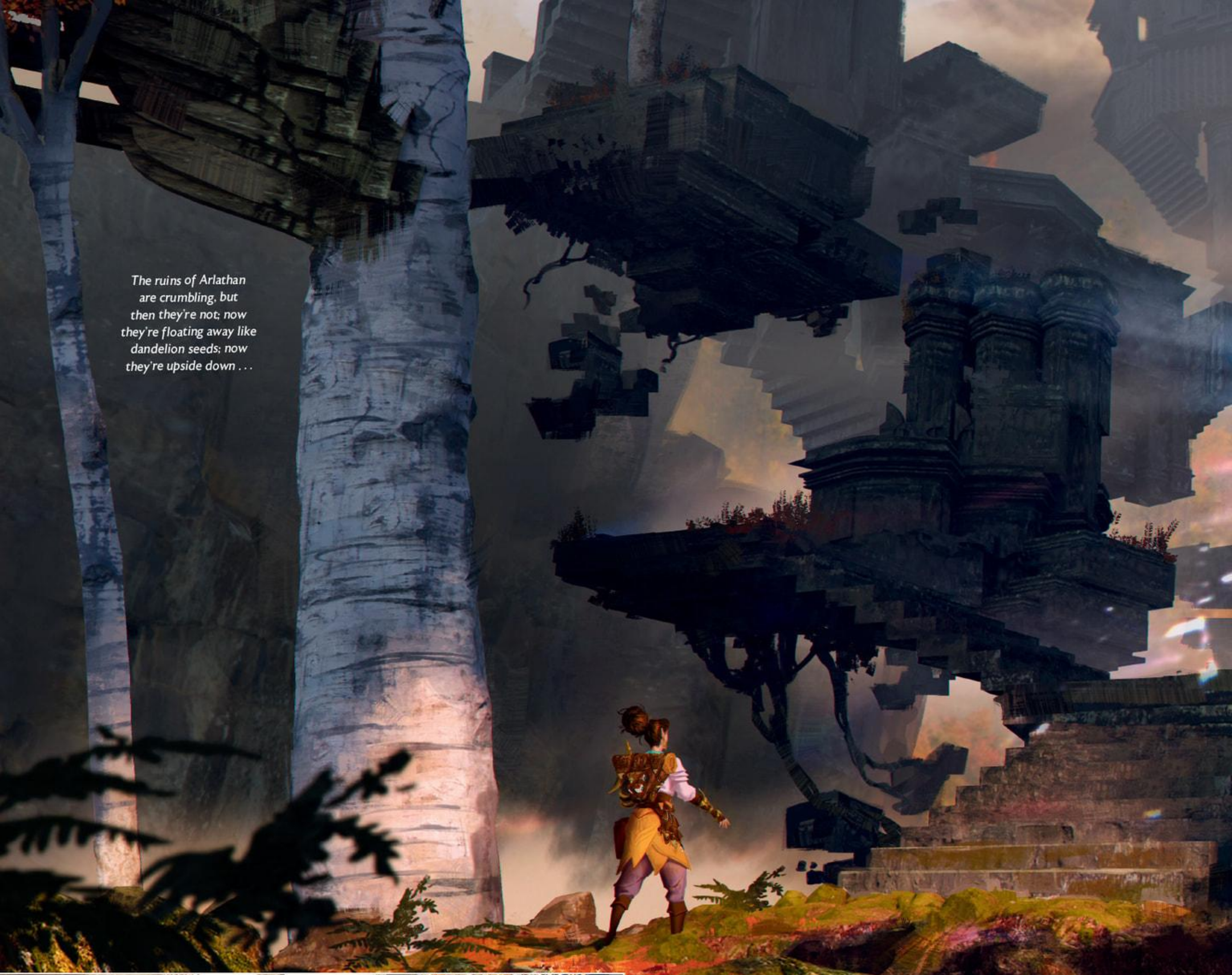
Explore deep enough, and you'll find many of Arlathan's ruins are still in pristine condition.



Early exploration of Veil Jumper treehouses, campsites, and activities.

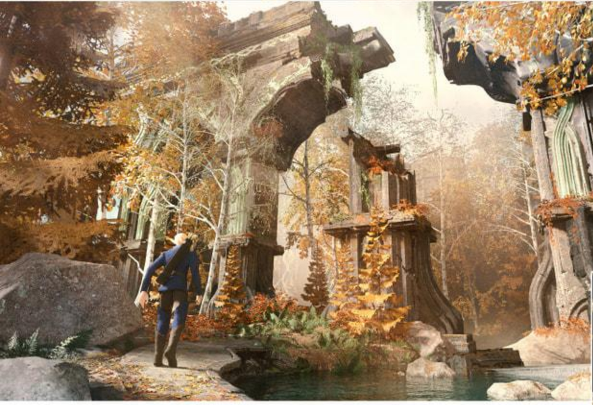


The remains of one of several ritual sites that can be found in Arlathan.

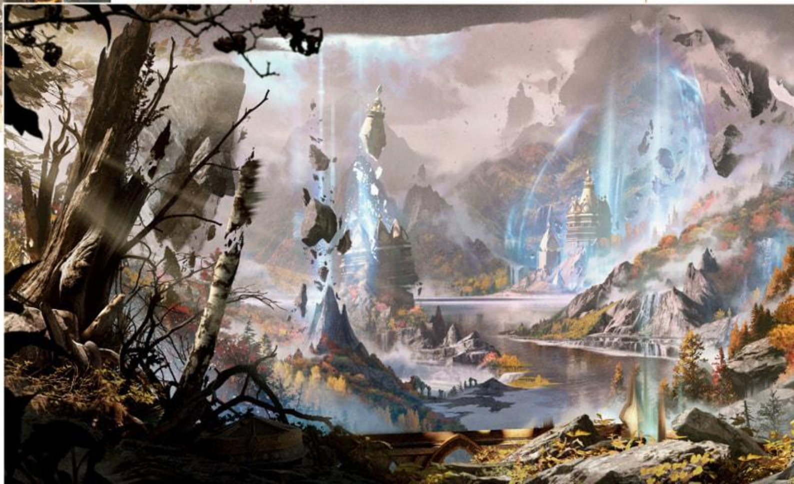


The ruins of Arlathan are crumbling, but then they're not; now they're floating away like dandelion seeds; now they're upside down . . .

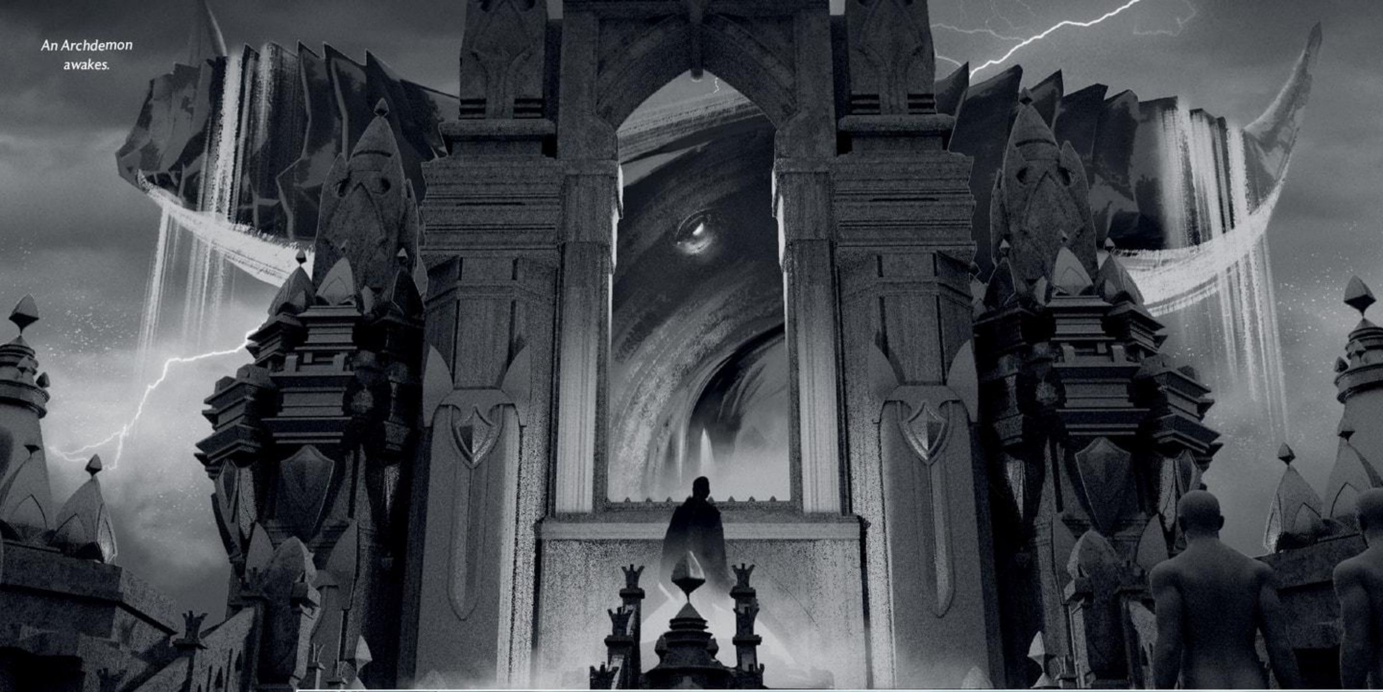
To differentiate it from previous forest and jungle locations in Dragon Age*, we went with an autumnal color palette. It has the benefit of feeling ominously like the end.*



Arlathan was once the capital of the elven empire in Thedas. Most of it has been drifting through the Fade for millennia, so what we see in Veilguard *is a small overgrown remnant of its former glory.*

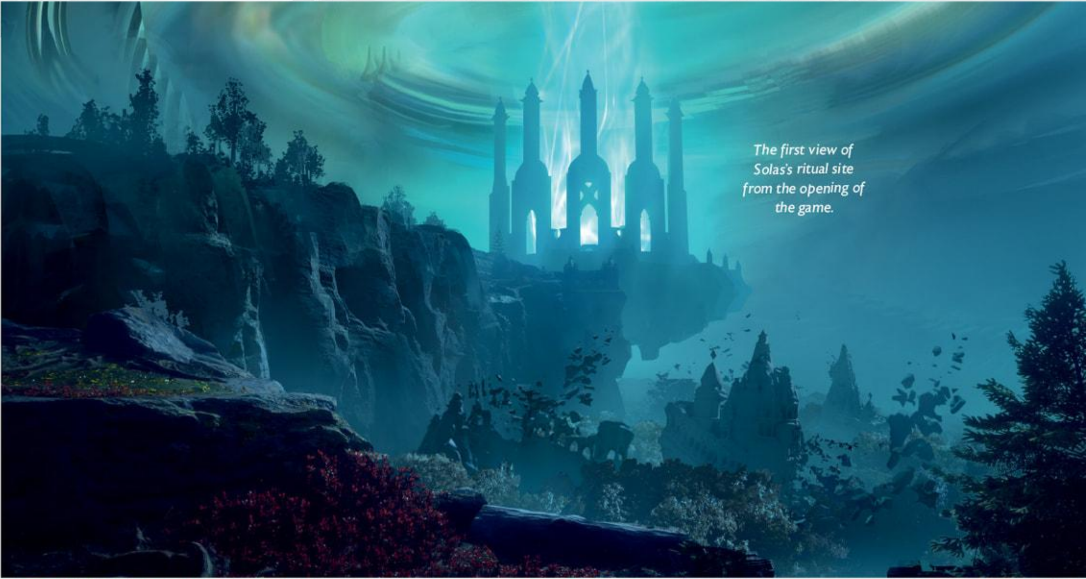


Finding doors to both strange new lands and familiar old lands.

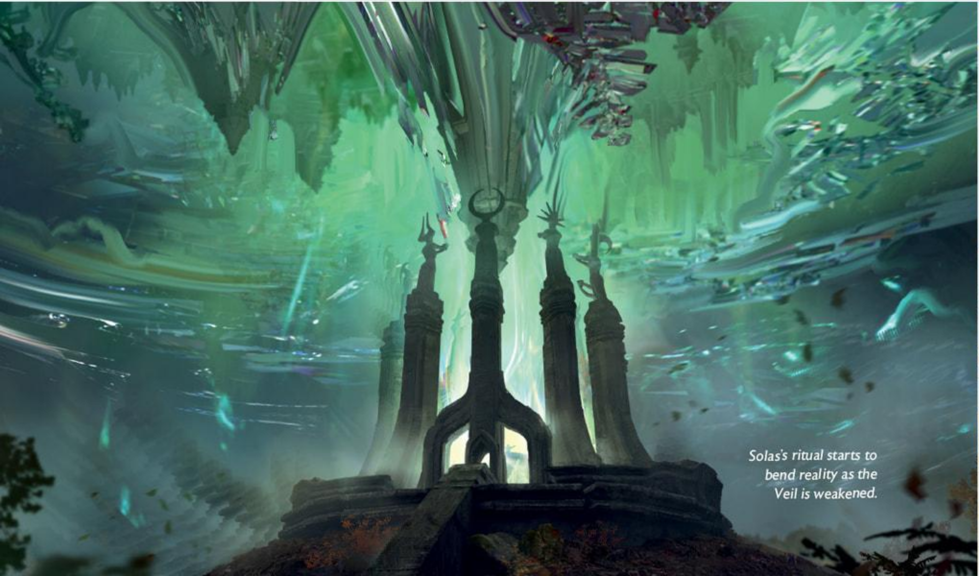


An Archdemon awakes.

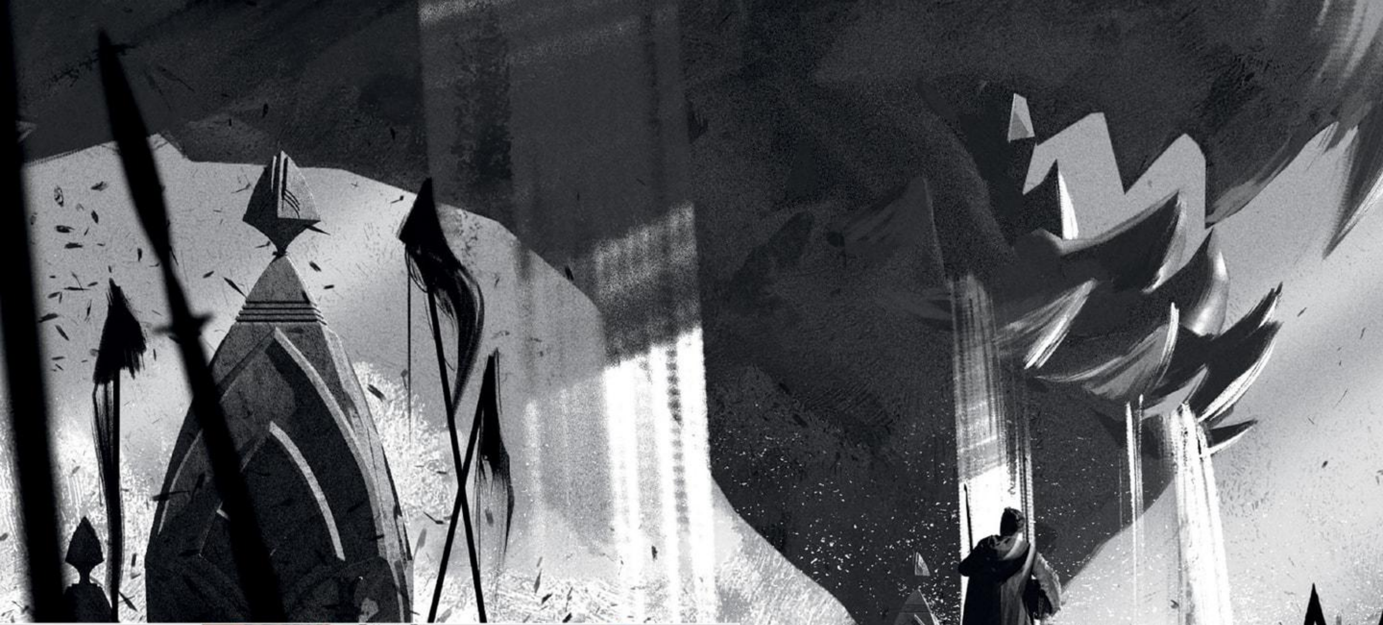
We've seen elven ruins since the first Dragon Age game. Arlathan is what remains of the former capital of their Thedas-spanning empire, so we wanted to imply more grandeur than ever.



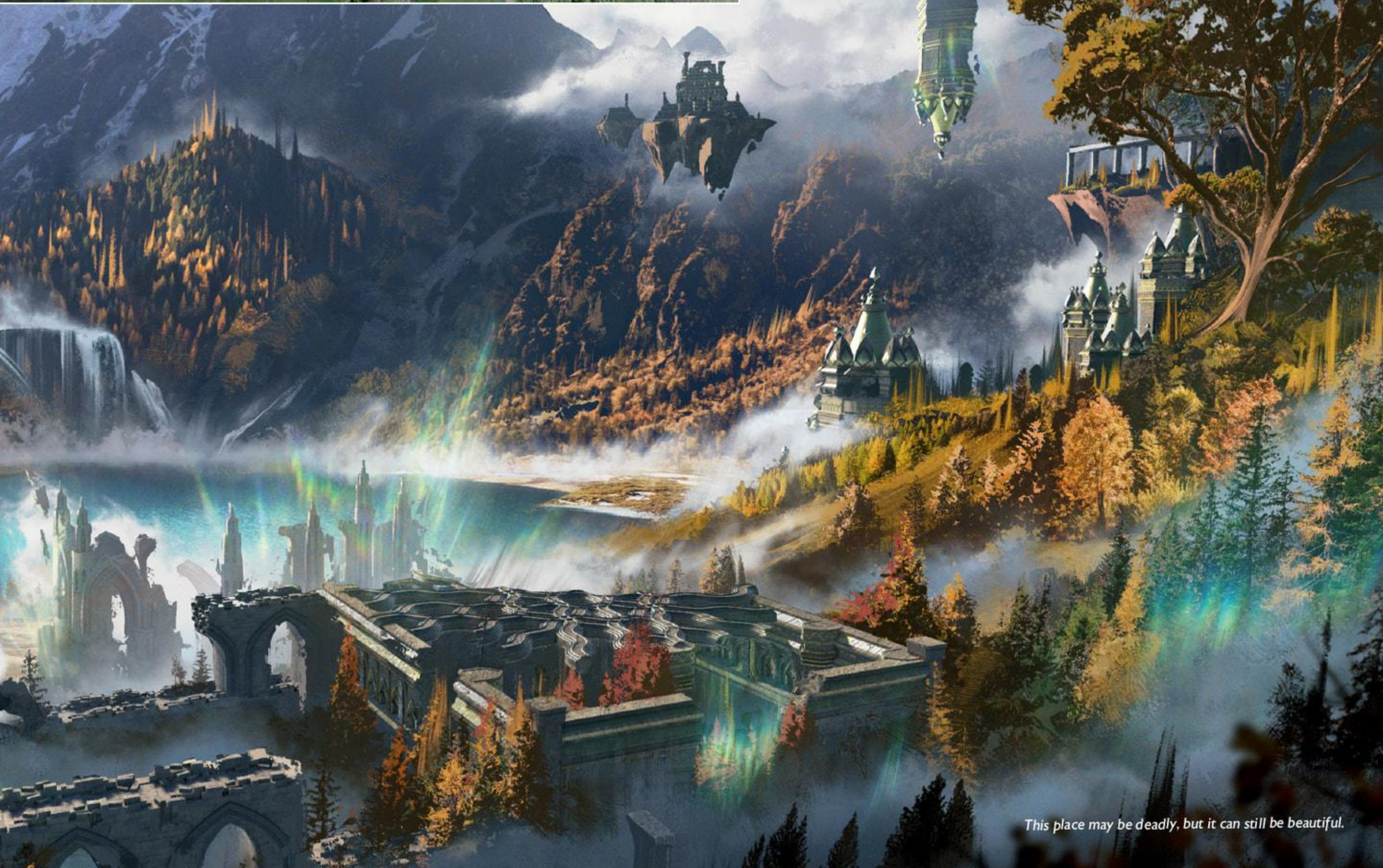
The first view of Solas's ritual site from the opening of the game.



Solas's ritual starts to bend reality as the Veil is weakened.

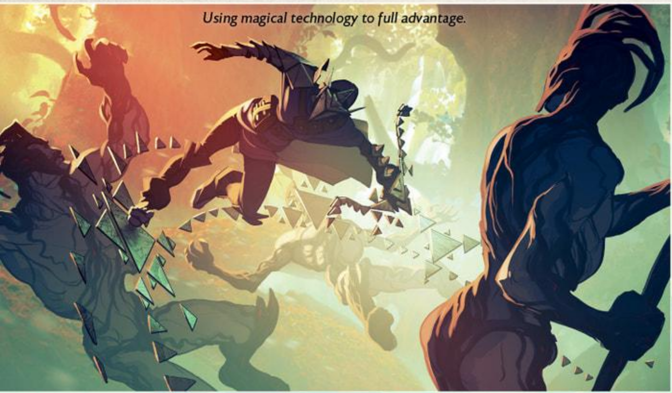


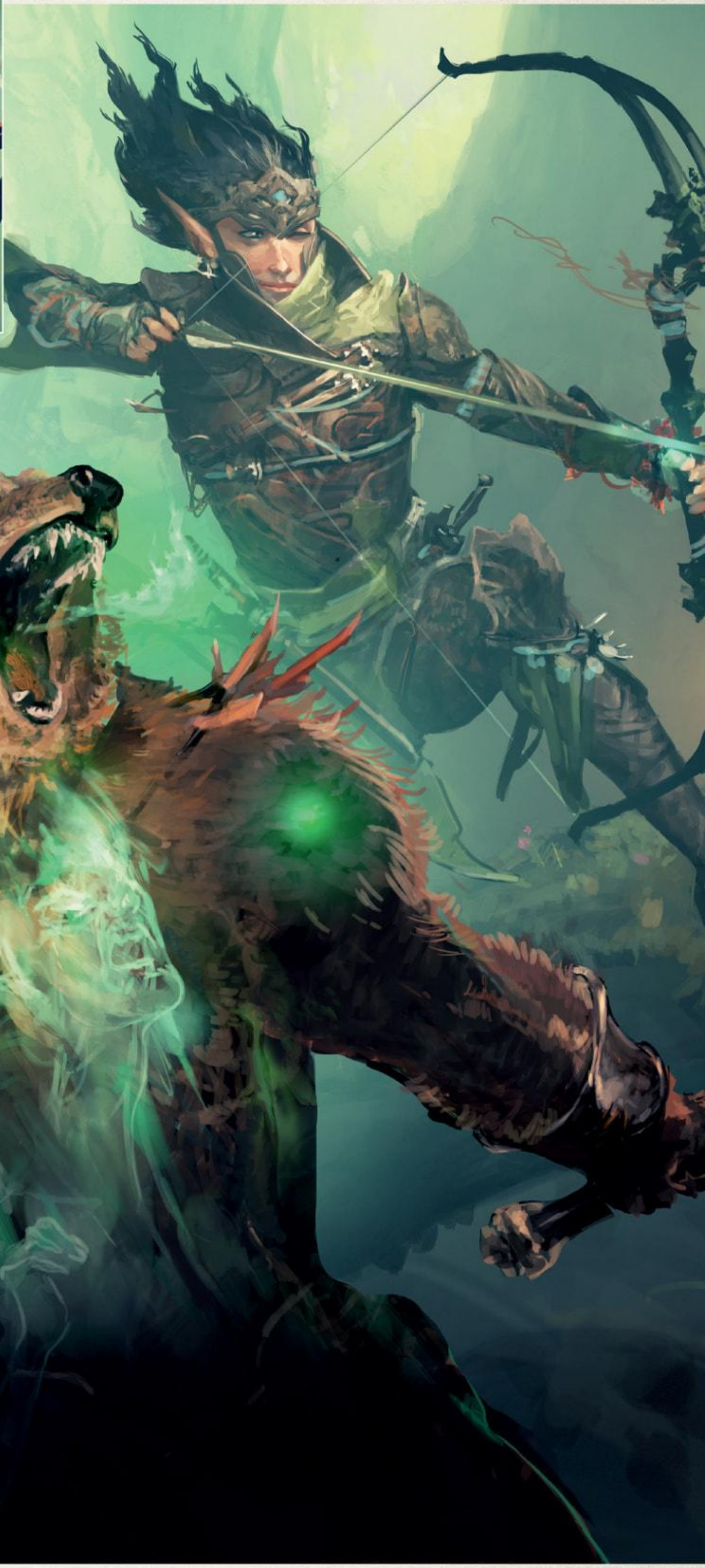
The Veil Jumpers are rarely comfortable setting up camp in the ruins. They'll often create smaller bases with their aravels.

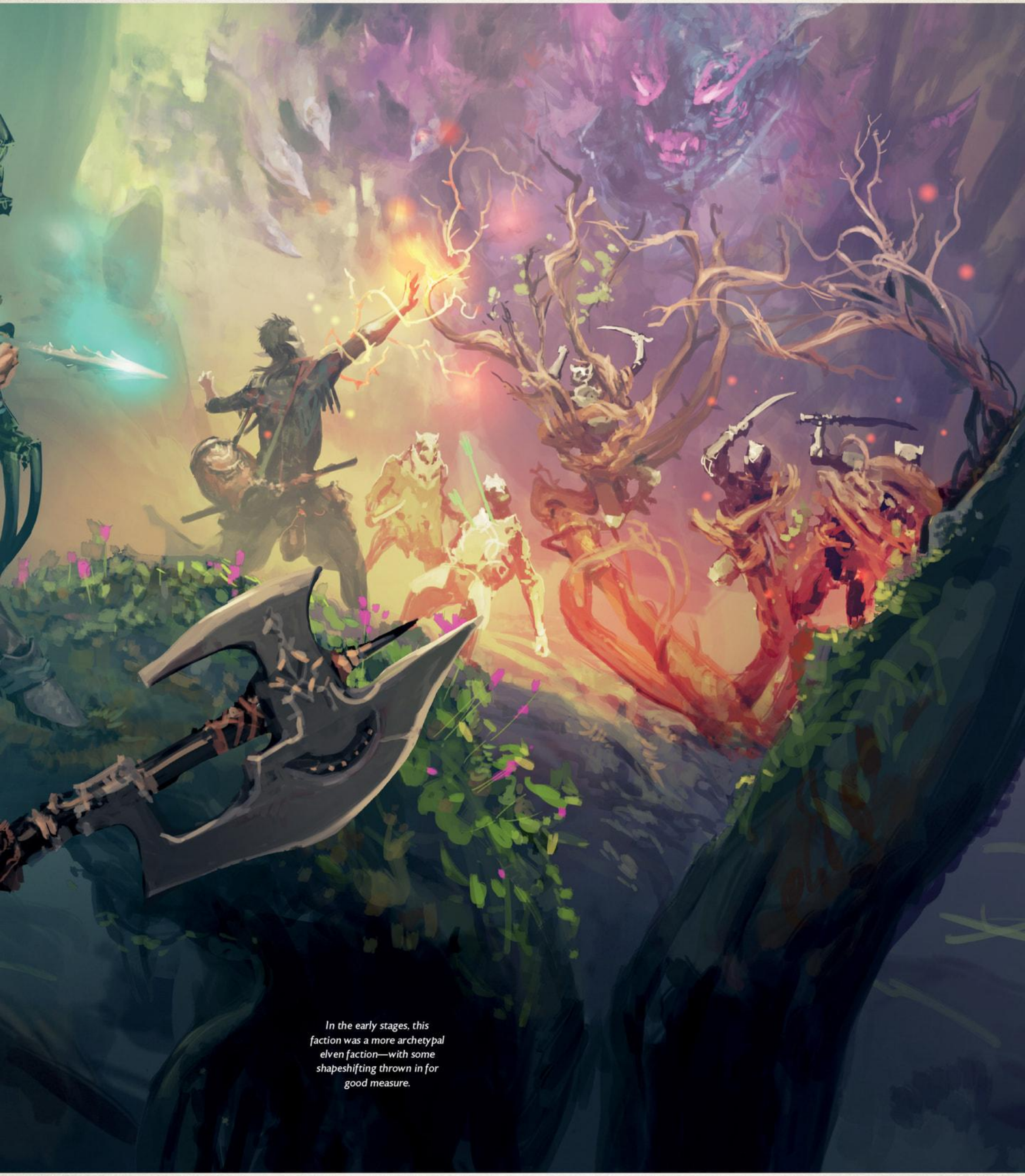


This place may be deadly, but it can still be beautiful.

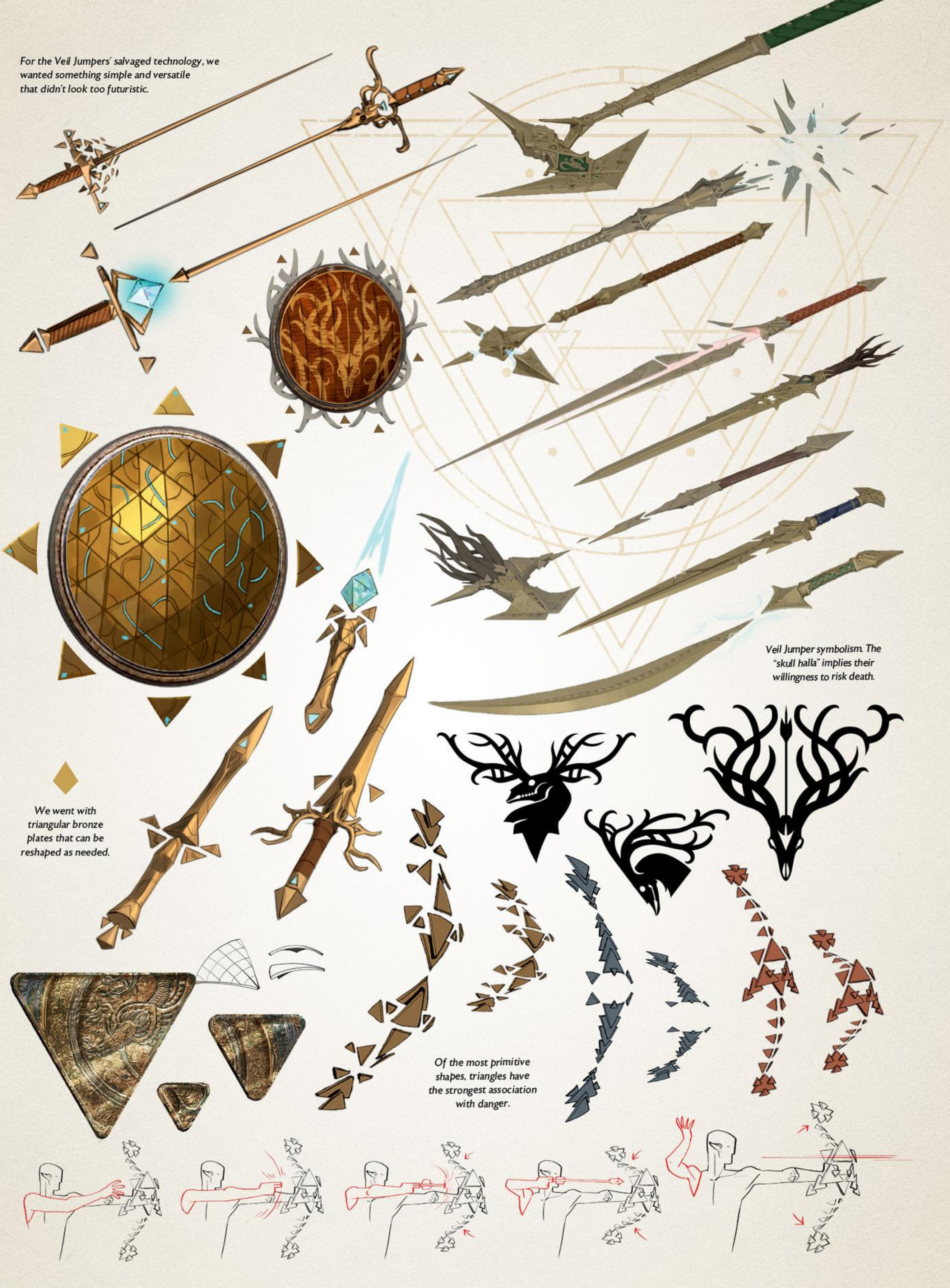
Using magical technology to full advantage.







In the early stages, this faction was a more archetypal elven faction—with some shapeshifting thrown in for good measure.

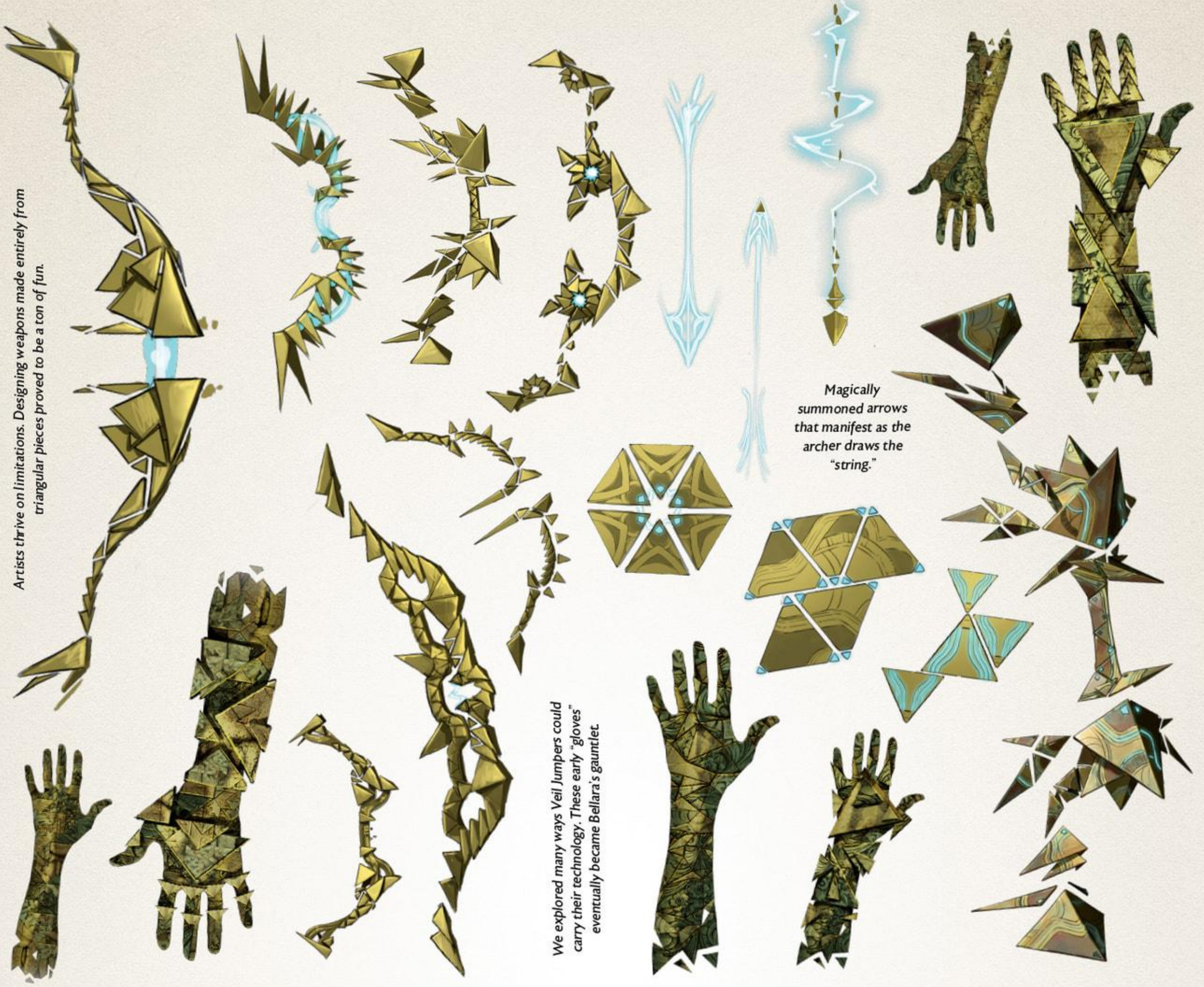


For the Veil Jumpers' salvaged technology, we wanted something simple and versatile that didn't look too futuristic.

Veil Jumper symbolism. The "skull halla" implies their willingness to risk death.

We went with triangular bronze plates that can be reshaped as needed.

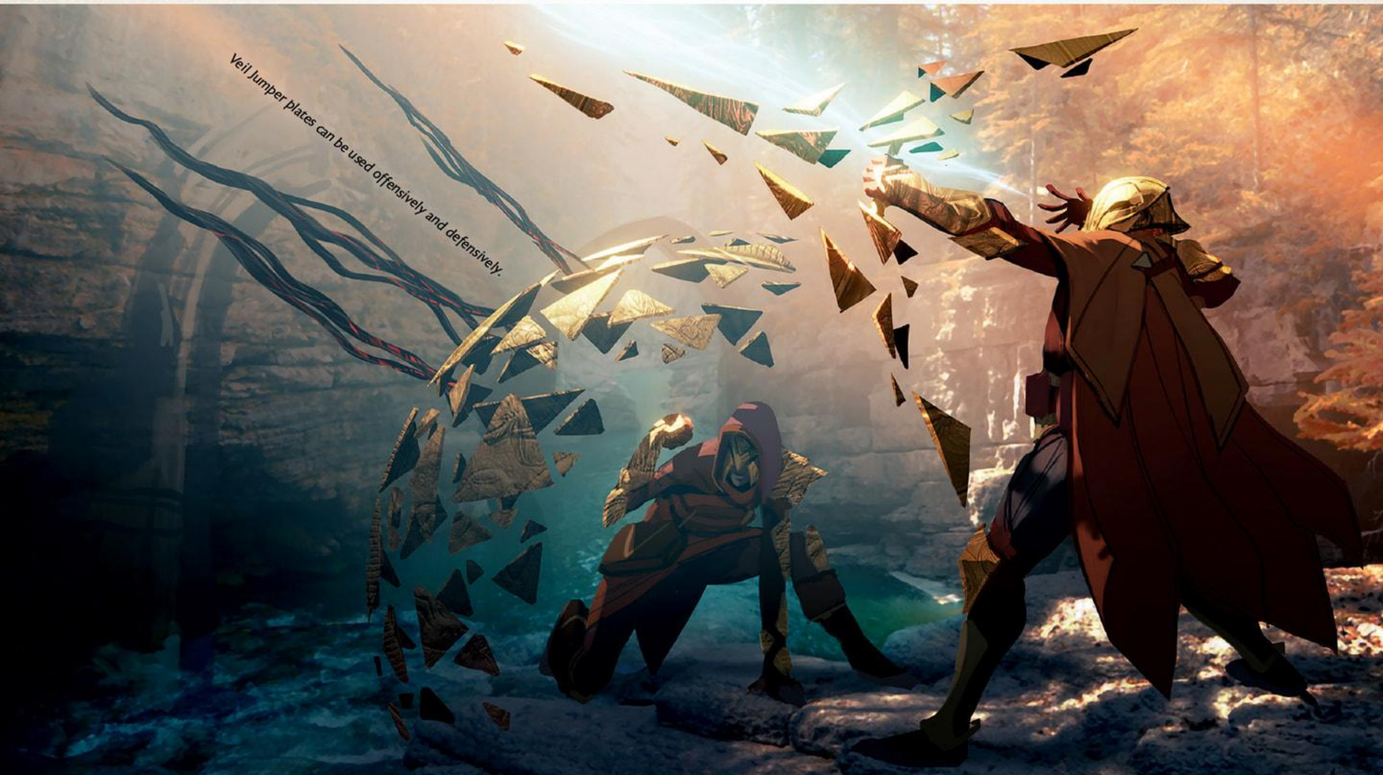
Of the most primitive shapes, triangles have the strongest association with danger.



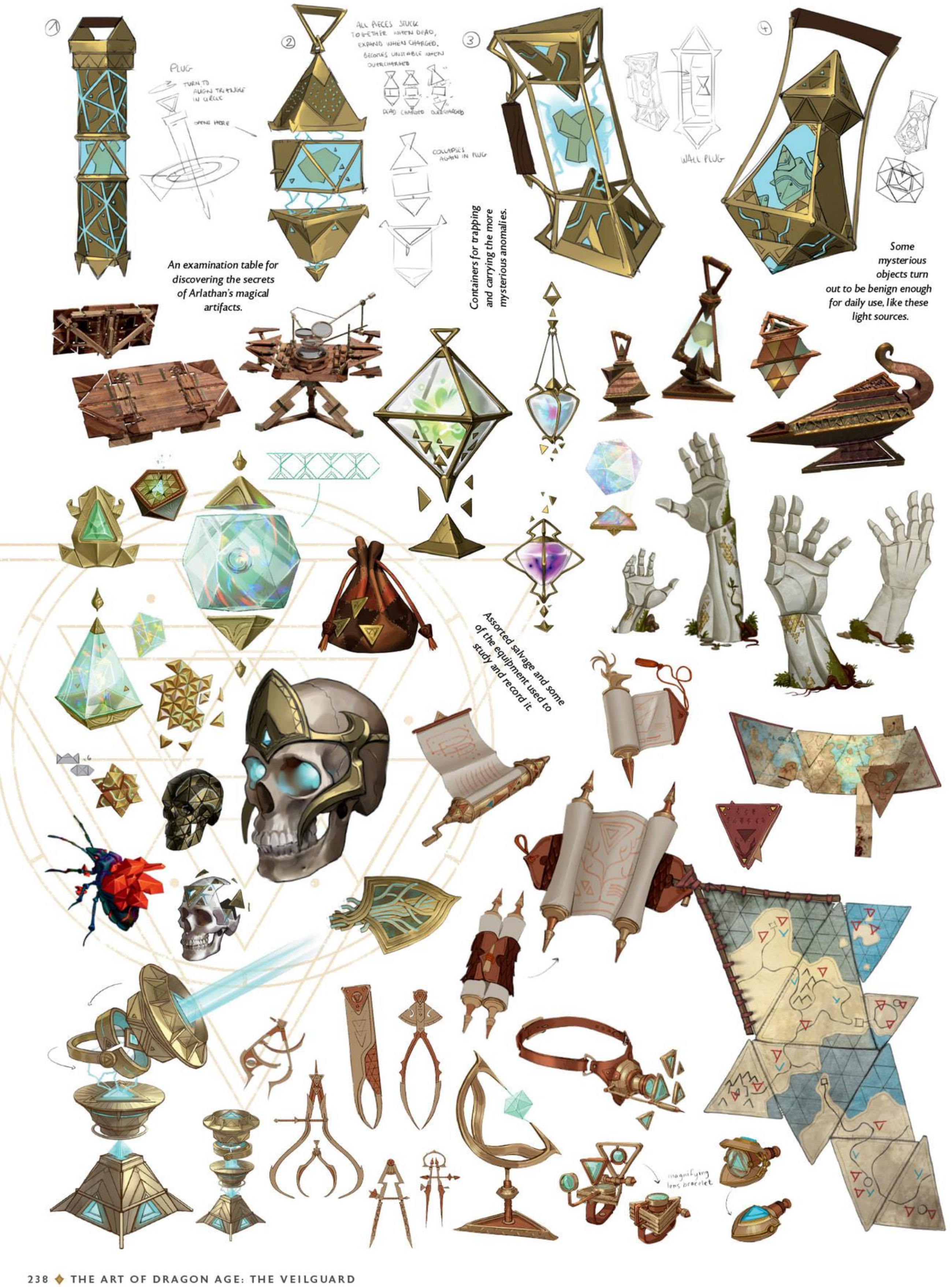
Artists thrive on limitations. Designing weapons made entirely from triangular pieces proved to be a ton of fun.

Magically summoned arrows that manifest as the archer draws the "string."

We explored many ways Veil Jumpers could carry their technology. These early "gloves" eventually became Bellara's gauntlet.



Veil Jumper plates can be used offensively and defensively.

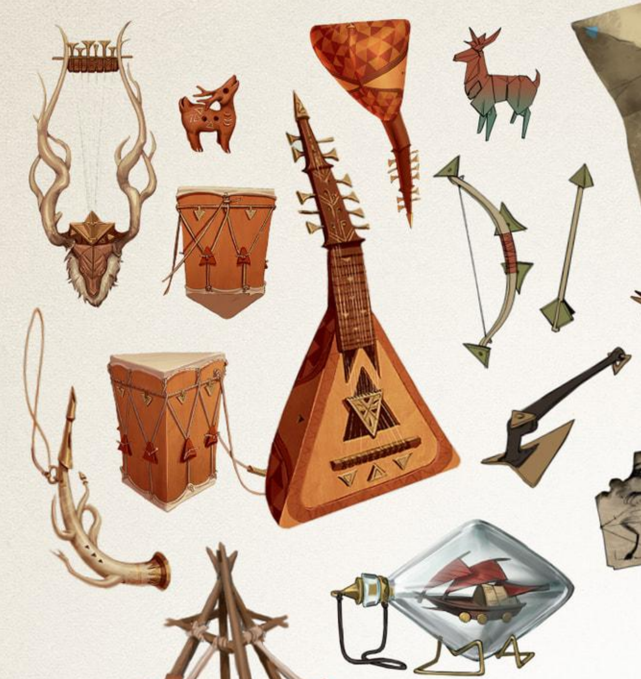

①
PLUG
TURN TO ALIGN TRIANGLE IN CIRCLE
OPENS HERE
②
ALL PIECES STUCK TOGETHER WHEN DEAD, EXPAND WHEN CHARGED. BECOMES UNSTABLE WHEN OVERCHARGED
DEAD
CHARGED
OVERCHARGED
COLLAPSES AGAIN IN PLUG
③
WALL PLUG
④
magnifying lens bracelet

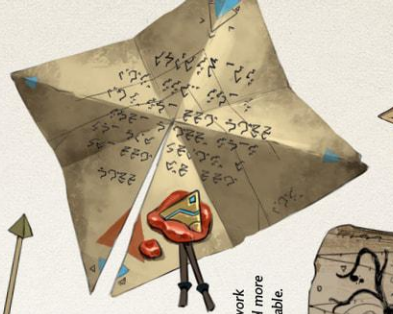
Containers for trapping and carrying the more mysterious anomalies.

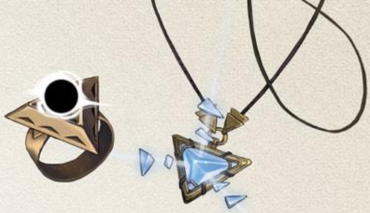
An examination table for discovering the secrets of Arlathan's magical artifacts.

Some mysterious objects turn out to be benign enough for daily use, like these light sources.

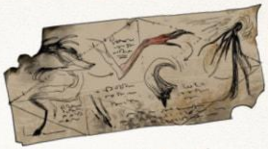
Assorted salvage and some of the equipment used to study and record it.

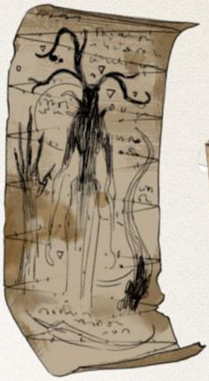


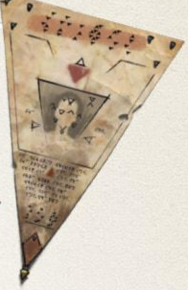




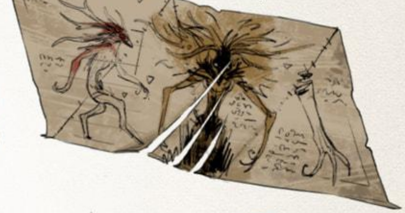
Instruments and artwork help make a faction feel more grounded and believable.

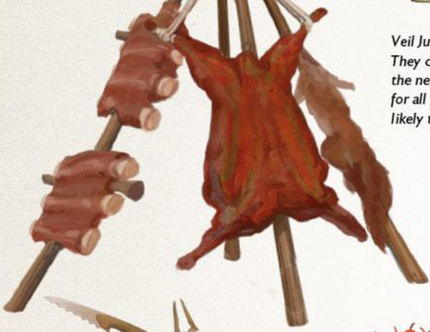


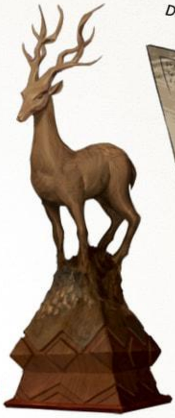




Diagrams of some of the more terrifying mysteries encountered in Arlathan Forest.

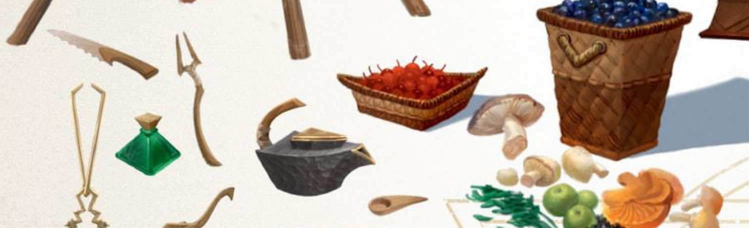


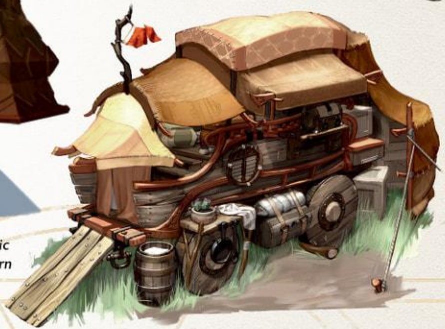




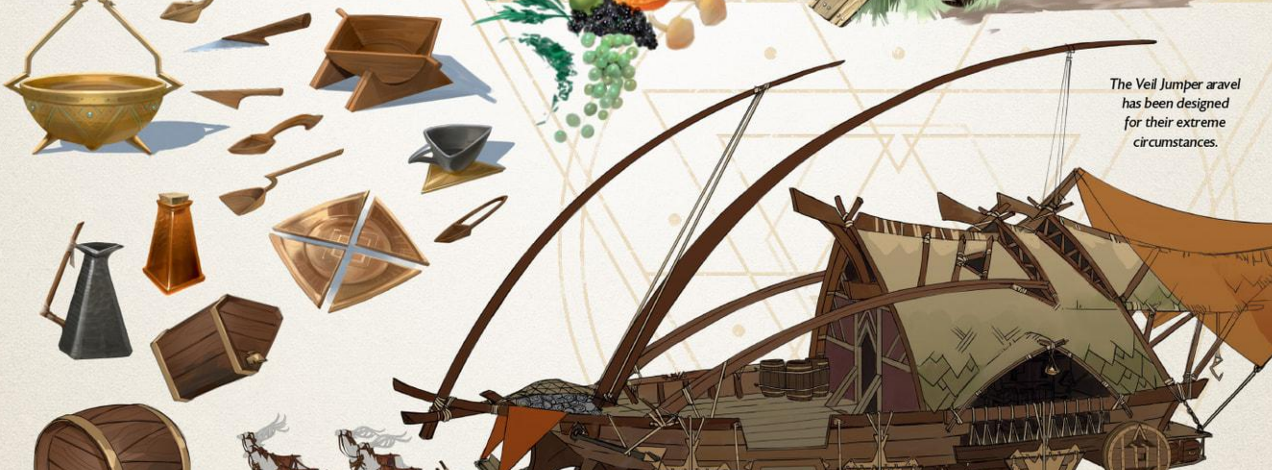
Veil Jumper props are all about field research. They carry simple camping equipment for the necessities, along with storage containers for all the technology and anomalies they're likely to find.

The Veil Jumper aravel is like a mobile base camp and laboratory on wheels. It can hover slightly above the ground, allowing it to enter locations a normal wagon couldn't.

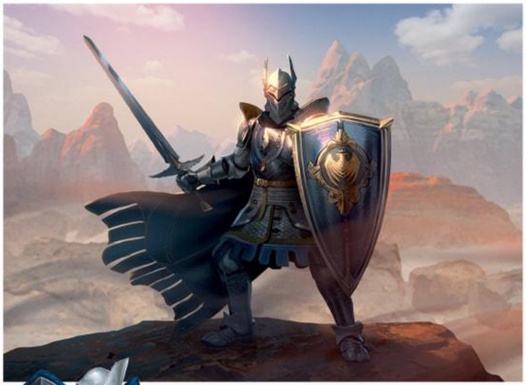




A classic southern aravel.

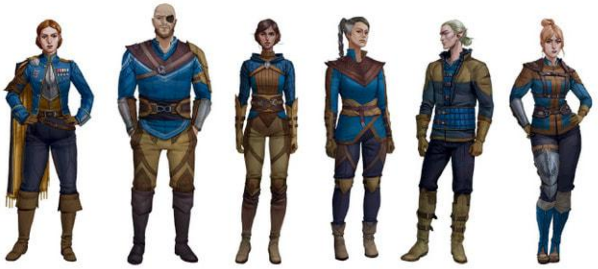


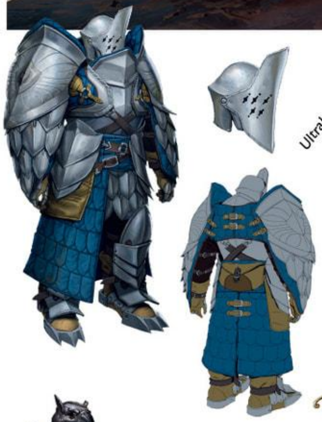
The Veil Jumper aravel has been designed for their extreme circumstances.



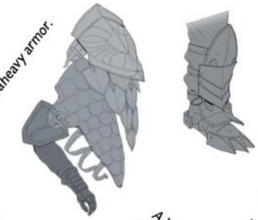
WARDENS

The Grey Wardens defend civilization from what goes bump in the night. Heads high, eyes open, and swords drawn, they walk toward what most people would flee. From darkspawn lurking in the shadows to monstrosities beyond imagination, the Wardens vanquish our greatest nightmares—until the Calling pulls them into the very darkness they fight. Working with the Wardens means standing side-by-side in the face of overwhelming odds. They have a grim sense of duty, but one that's balanced by an exhilarating sense of adventure, unwavering determination, and a little gallows humor.

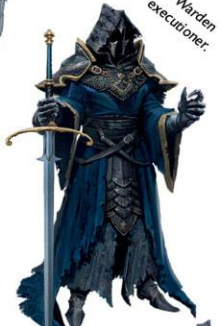


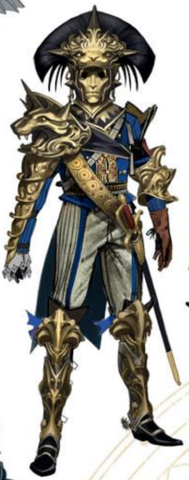


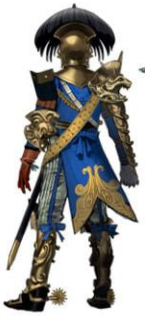
Ultraheavy armor.

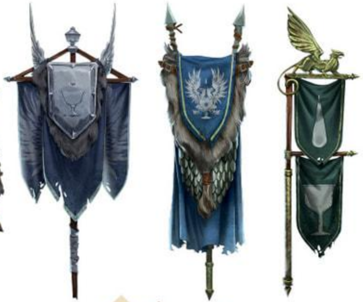


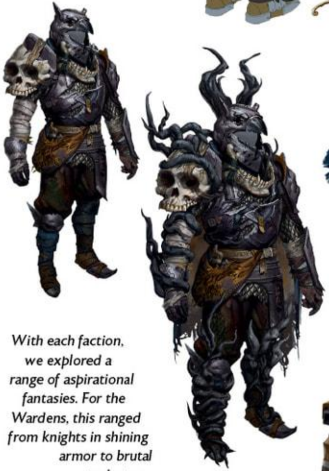
A Warden executioner.

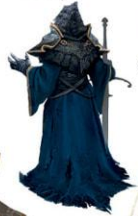




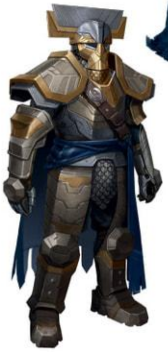




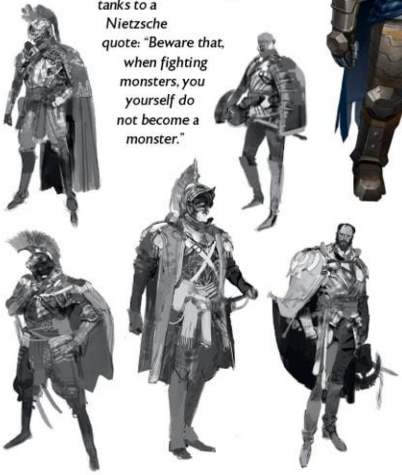




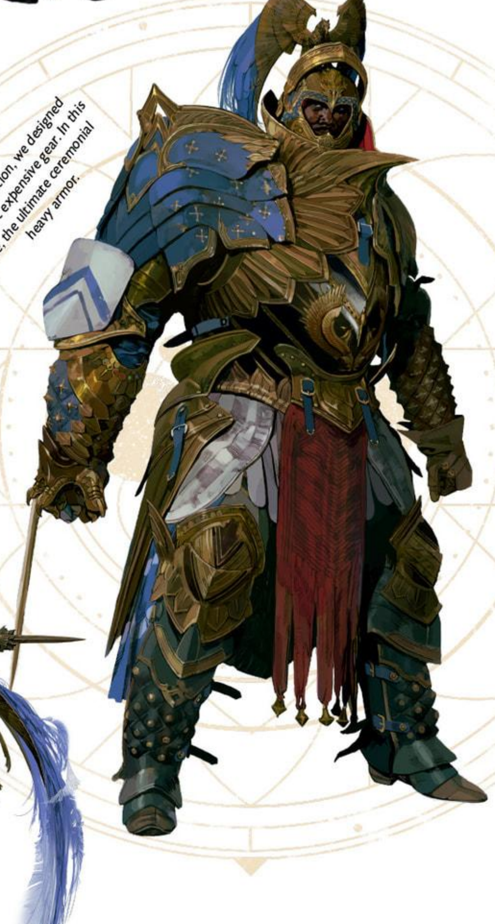
A dwarven Warden.

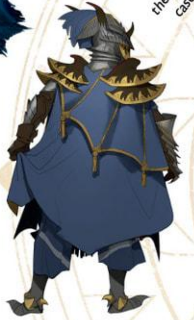


With each faction, we explored a range of aspirational fantasies. For the Wardens, this ranged from knights in shining armor to brutal tanks to a Nietzsche quote: "Beware that, when fighting monsters, you yourself do not become a monster."

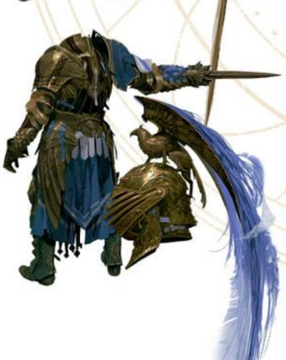


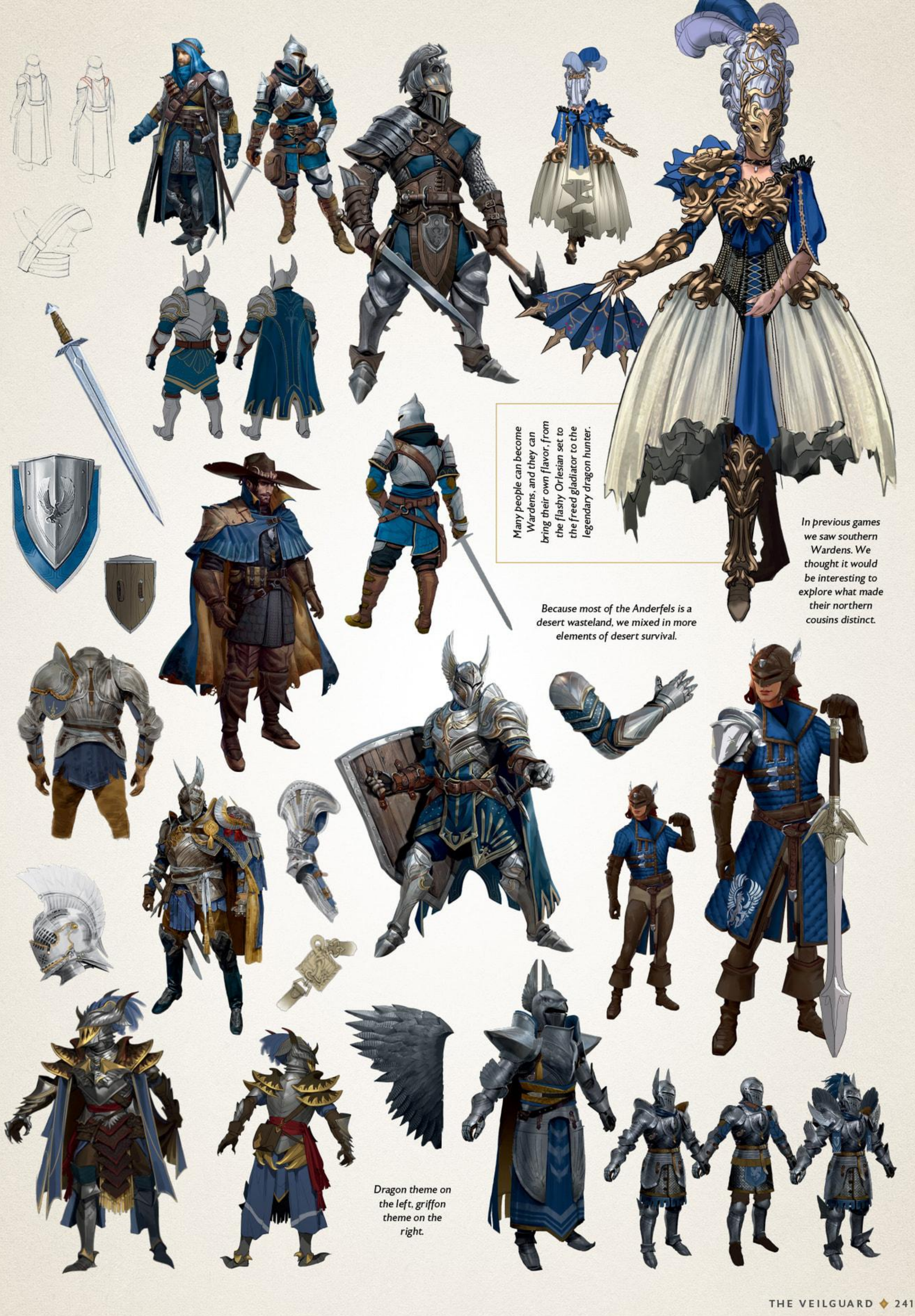
For each faction, we designed their most expensive gear. In this case, the ultimate ceremonial heavy armor.





After being corrupted by Corypheus in Inquisition, the Wardens will once again play the role of heroes—if undeniably flawed ones, as so many Dragon Age heroes are.





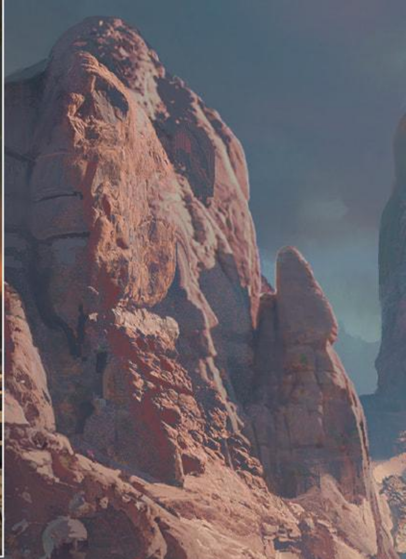
Many people can become Wardens, and they can bring their own flavor, from the flashy Orlesian set to the freed gladiator to the legendary dragon hunter.

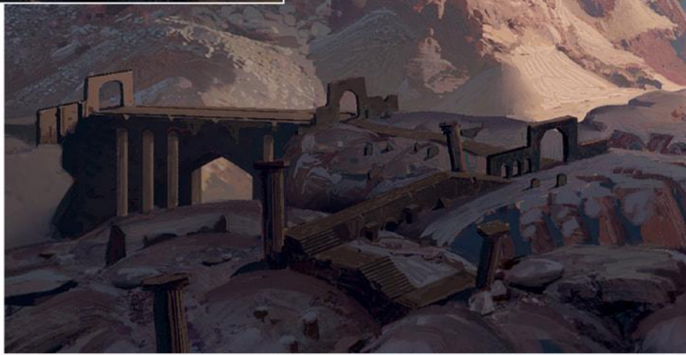
Because most of the Anderfels is a desert wasteland, we mixed in more elements of desert survival.

In previous games we saw southern Wardens. We thought it would be interesting to explore what made their northern cousins distinct.

Dragon theme on the left, griffon theme on the right.

The war room at the heart of Weisshaupt Fortress.

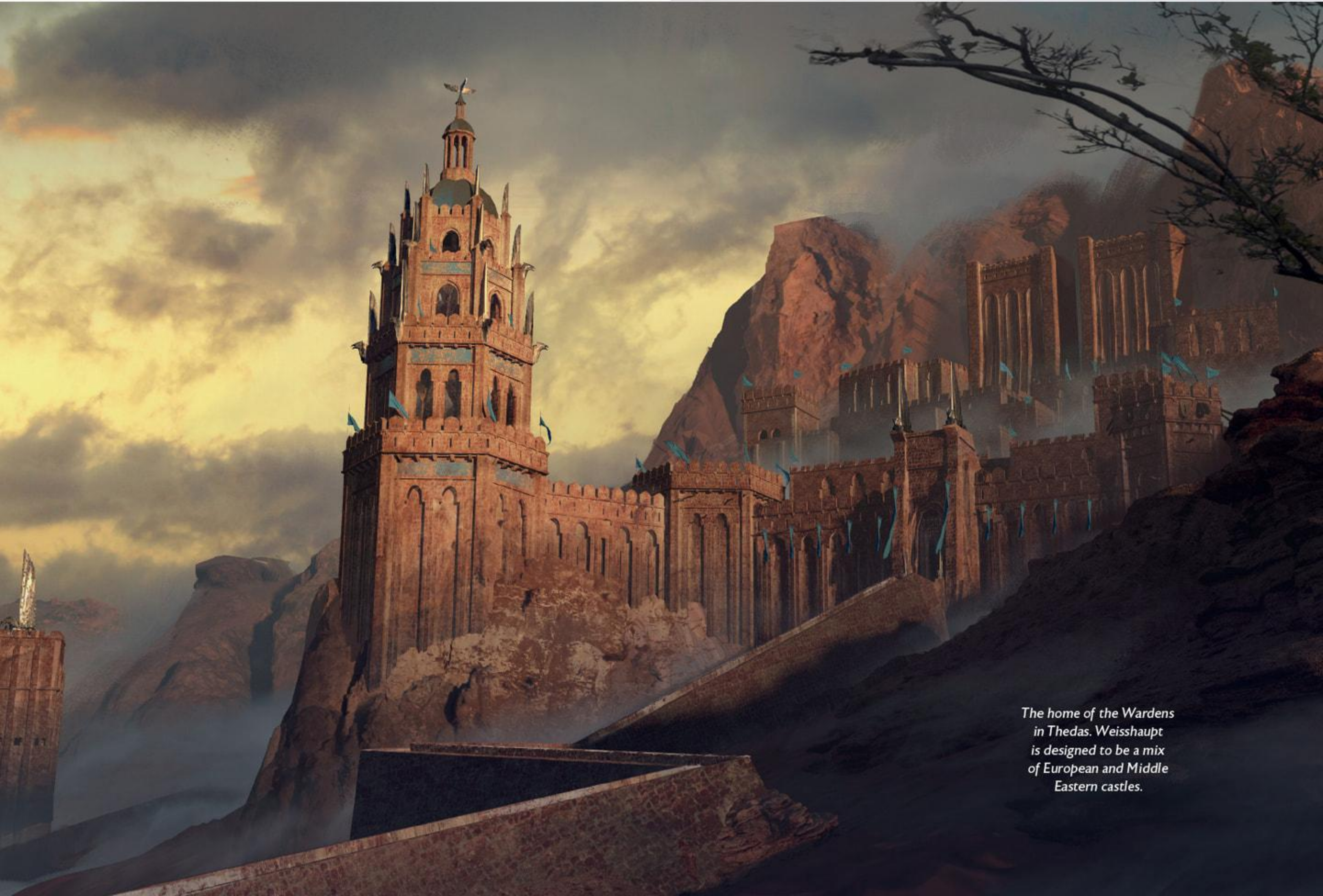




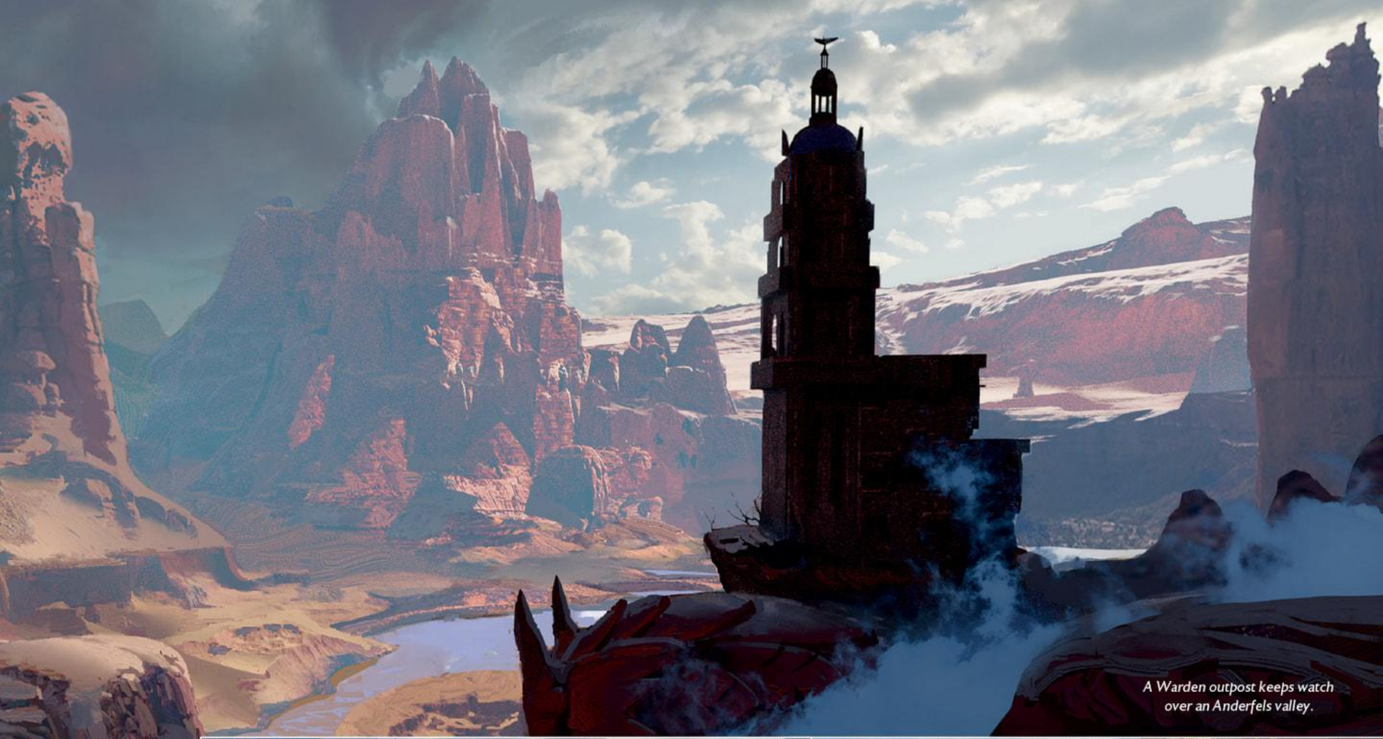
ANDERFELS

The Anderfels is a vast red desert that is often quite cold. It is also regularly attacked by roving hordes of darkspawn. Everything is built to withstand this harsh environment.

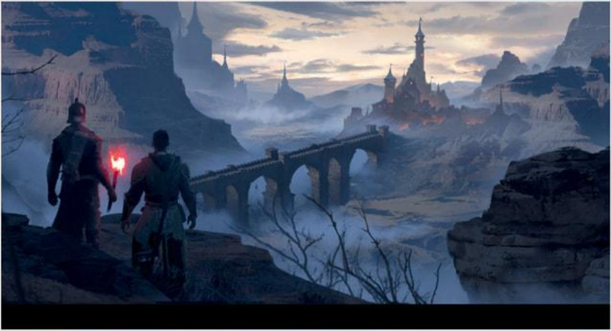
Weisshaupt Fortress—the ancient and mysterious Grey Warden stronghold—rests in the southern Anderfels. A mere shadow of its former self with large portions left dark and unused, it still supplies and houses the Warden Order. A temporary haven in a harsh land . . . until the gods destroy it.

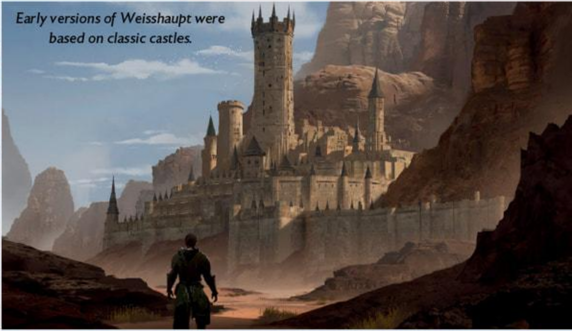


The home of the Wardens in Thedas. Weisshaupt is designed to be a mix of European and Middle Eastern castles.

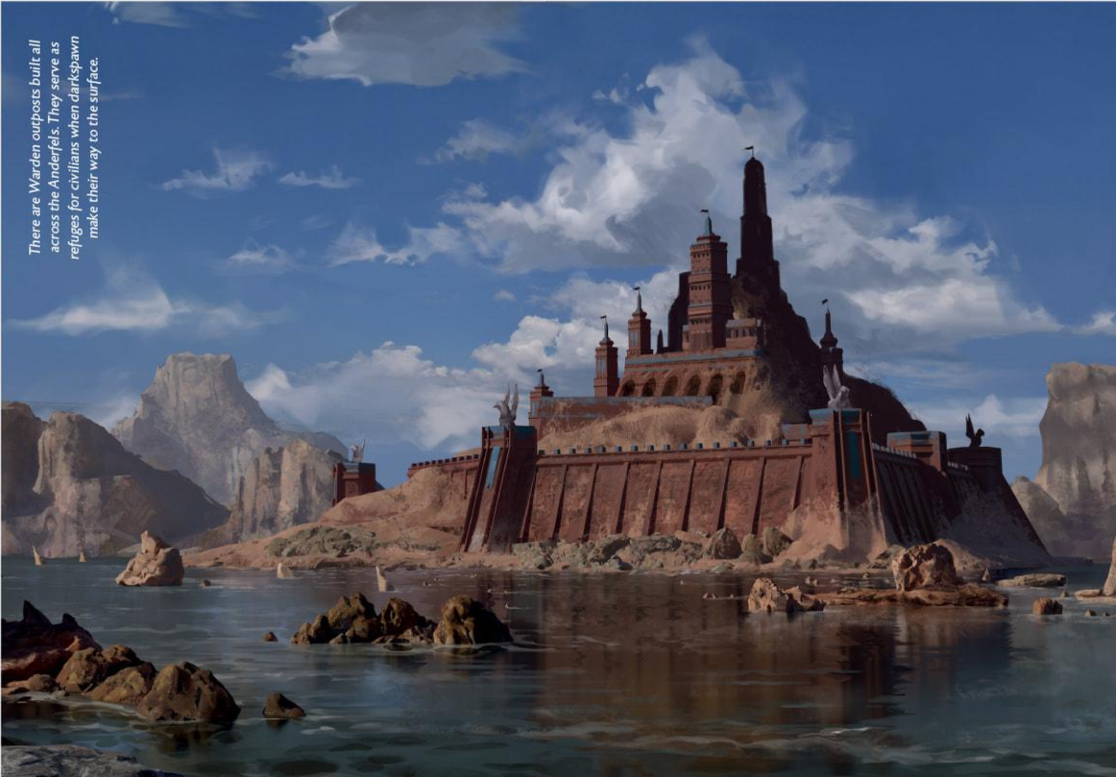


A Warden outpost keeps watch over an Anderfels valley.

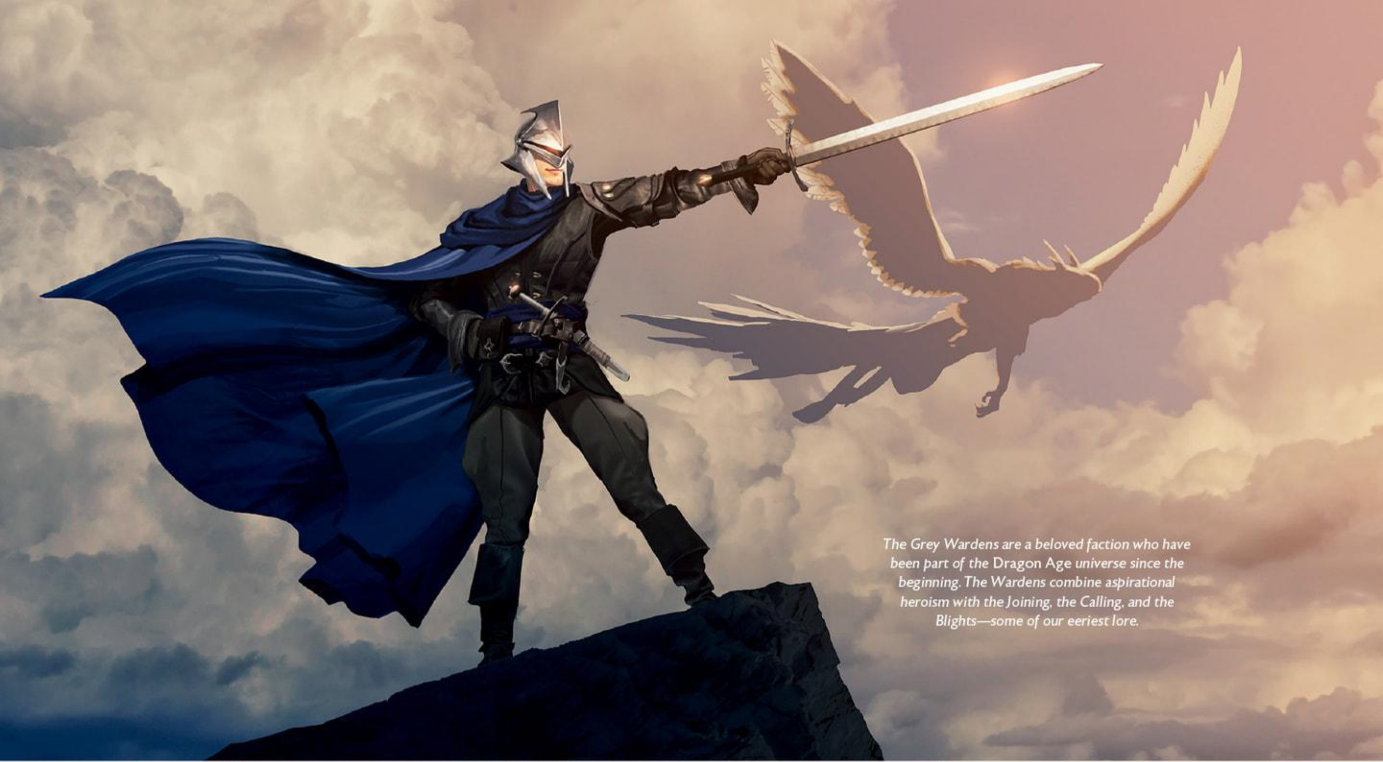




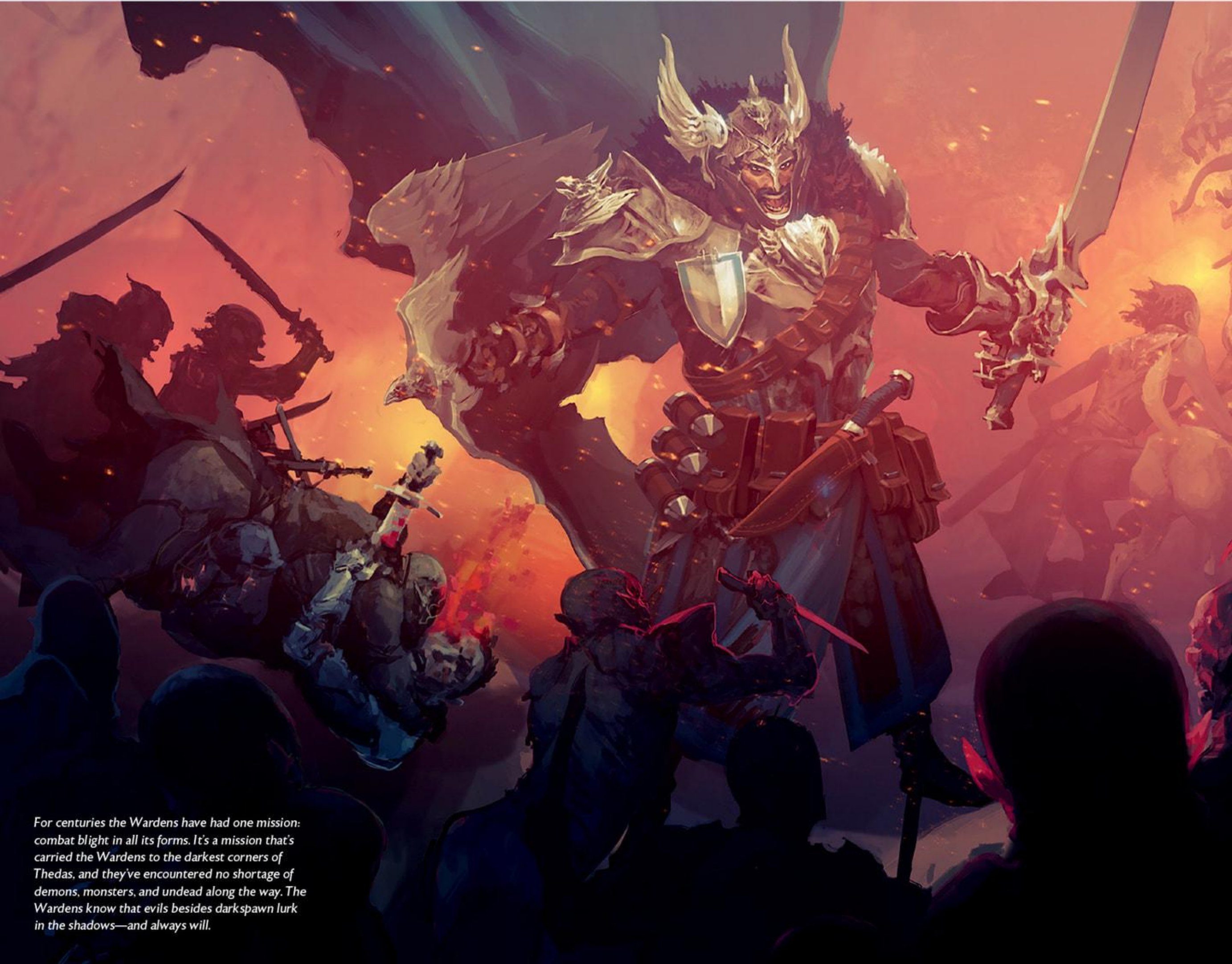
Early versions of Weisshaupt were based on classic castles.



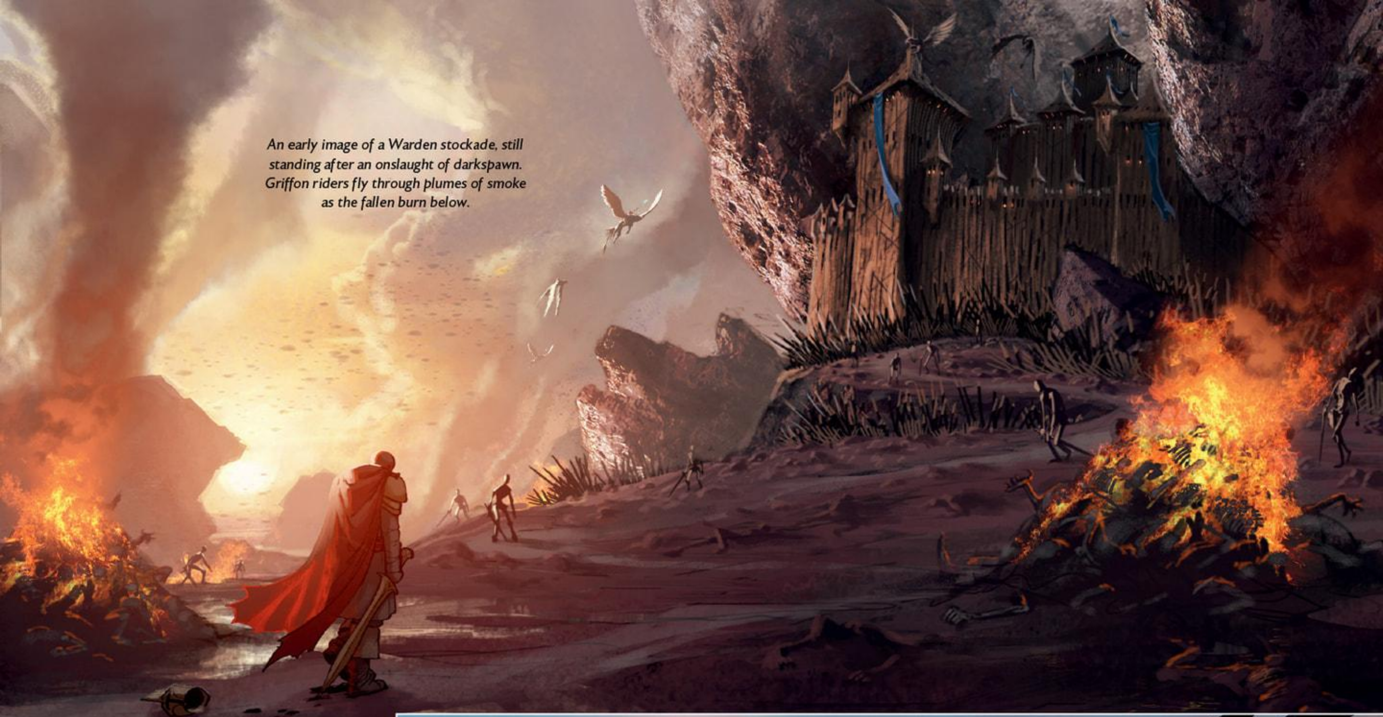
There are Warden outposts built all across the Anderfels. They serve as refuges for civilians when darkspawn make their way to the surface.



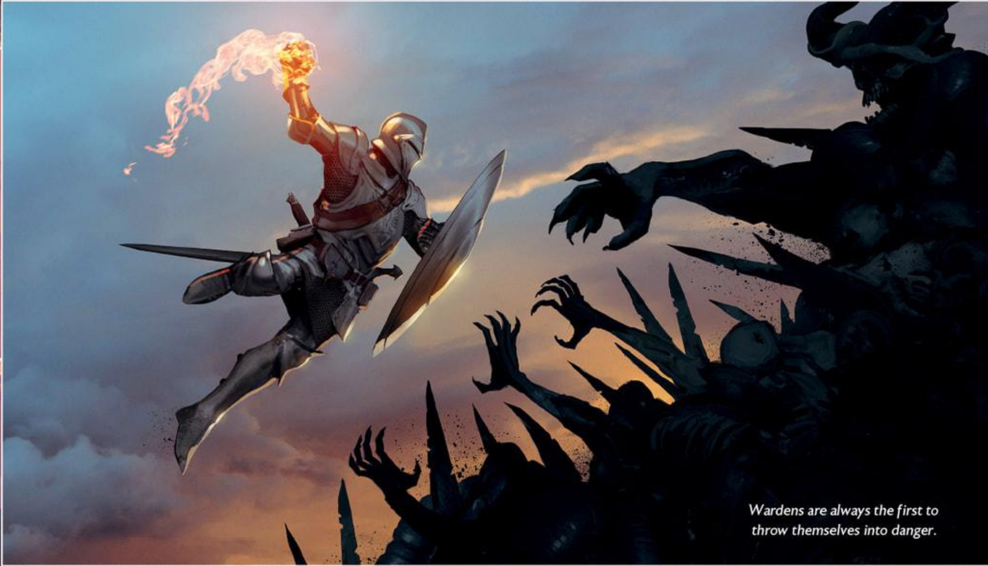
The Grey Wardens are a beloved faction who have been part of the Dragon Age universe since the beginning. The Wardens combine aspirational heroism with the Joining, the Calling, and the Blights—some of our eeriest lore.



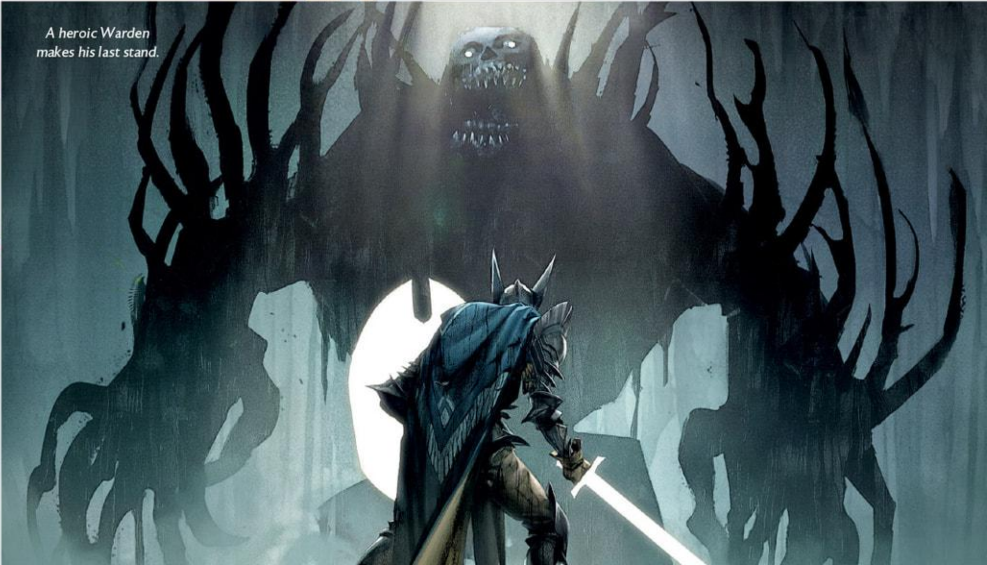
For centuries the Wardens have had one mission: combat blight in all its forms. It's a mission that's carried the Wardens to the darkest corners of Thedas, and they've encountered no shortage of demons, monsters, and undead along the way. The Wardens know that evils besides darkspawn lurk in the shadows—and always will.



An early image of a Warden stockade, still standing after an onslaught of darkspawn. Griffon riders fly through plumes of smoke as the fallen burn below.

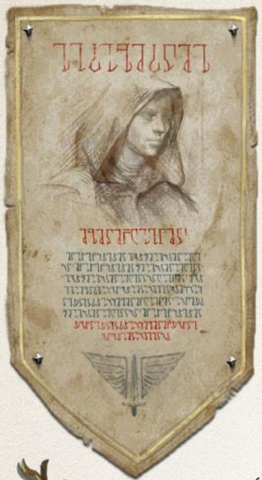


Wardens are always the first to throw themselves into danger.

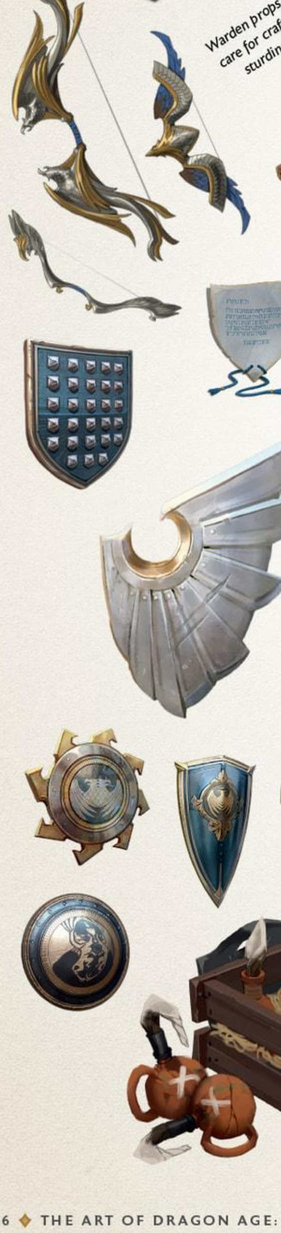


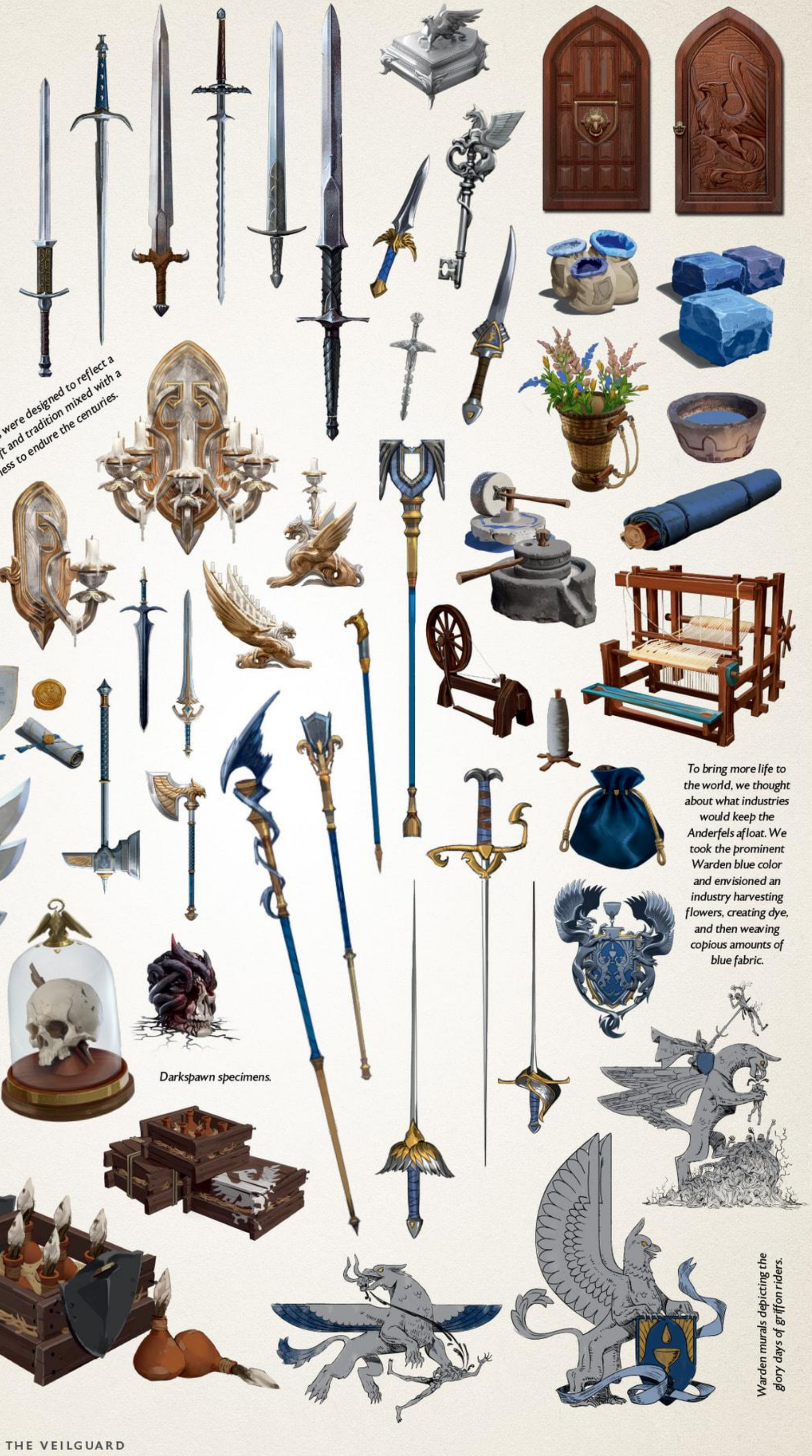
A heroic Warden makes his last stand.

A Warden wanted poster.



Warden props were designed to reflect a care for craft and tradition mixed with a sturdiness to endure the centuries.

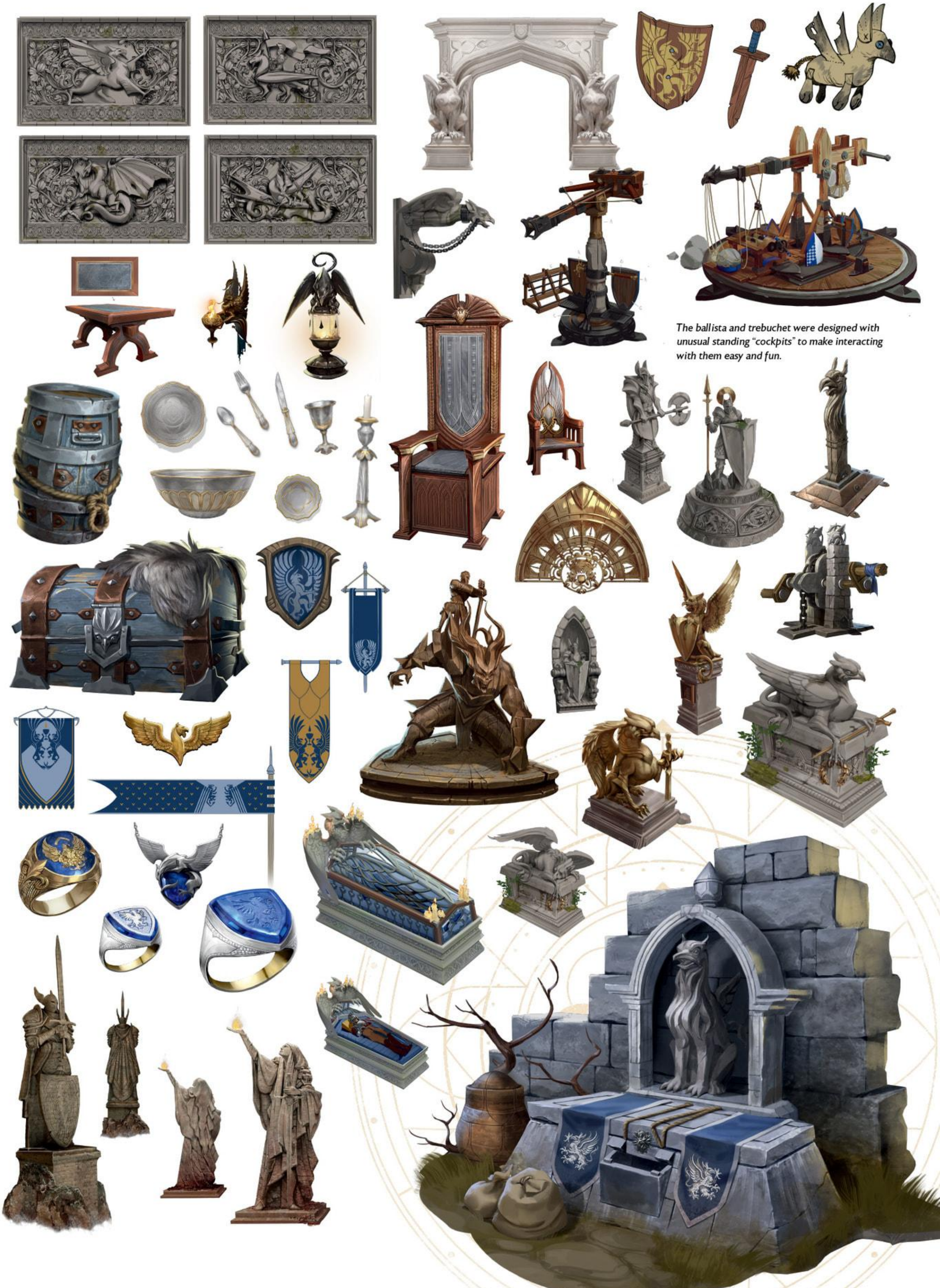




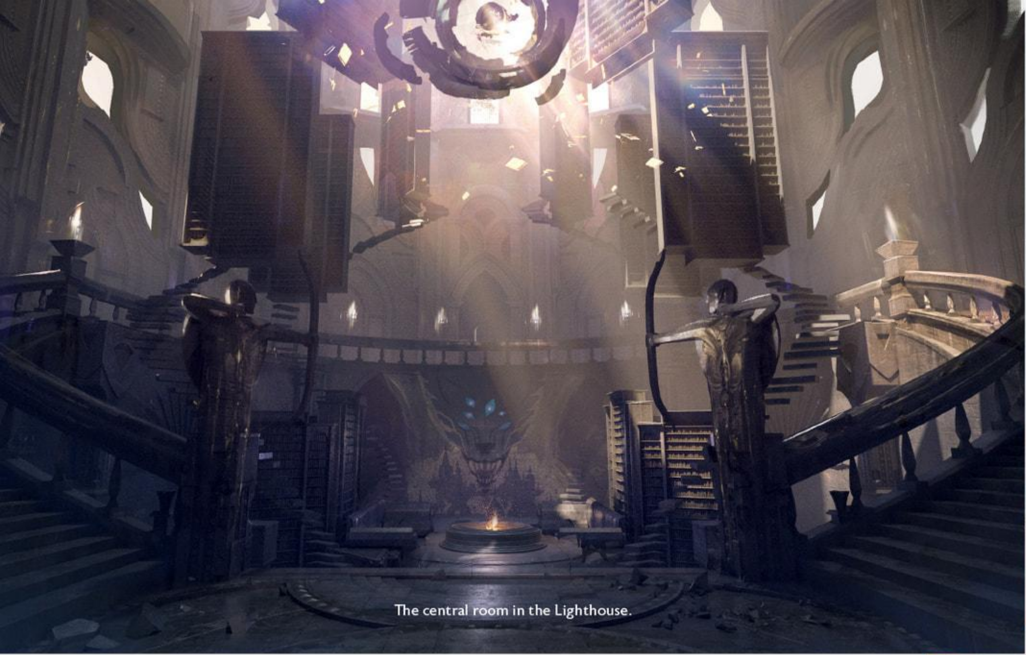
Darkspawn specimens.

To bring more life to the world, we thought about what industries would keep the Anderfels afloat. We took the prominent Warden blue color and envisioned an industry harvesting flowers, creating dye, and then weaving copious amounts of blue fabric.

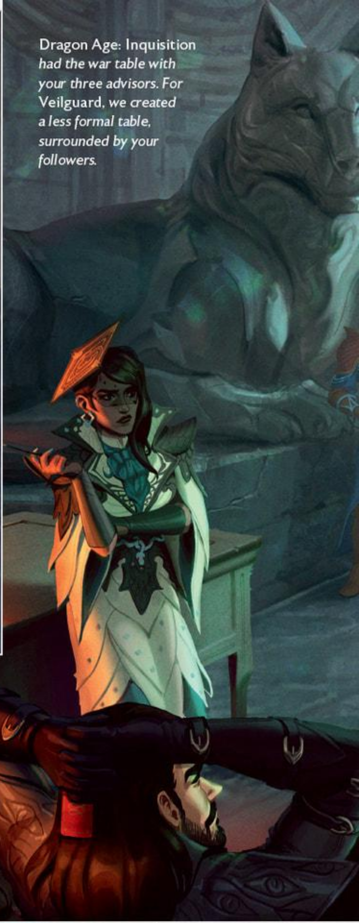
Warden murals depicting the glory days of griffon riders.



The ballista and trebuchet were designed with unusual standing "cockpits" to make interacting with them easy and fun.



The central room in the Lighthouse.

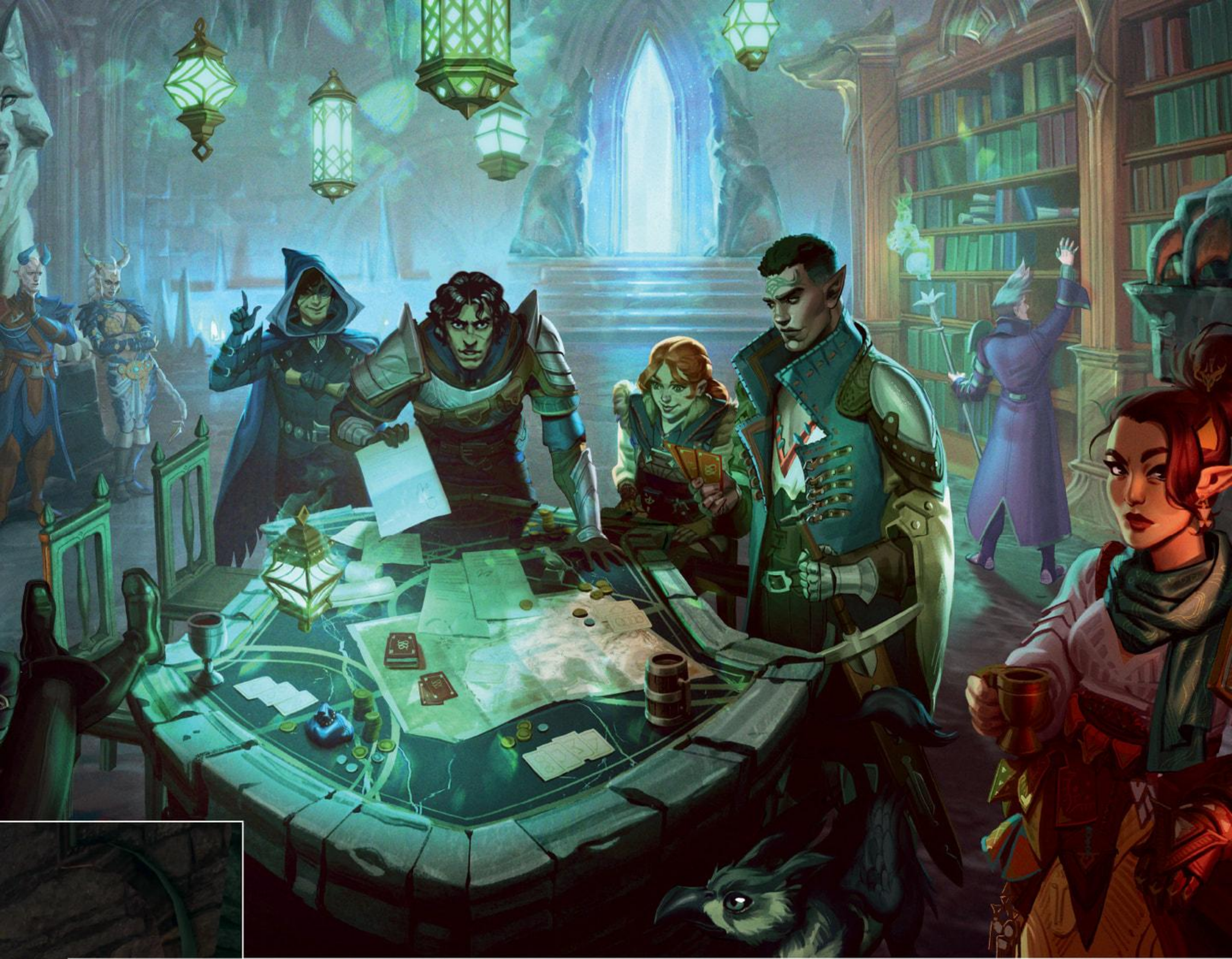


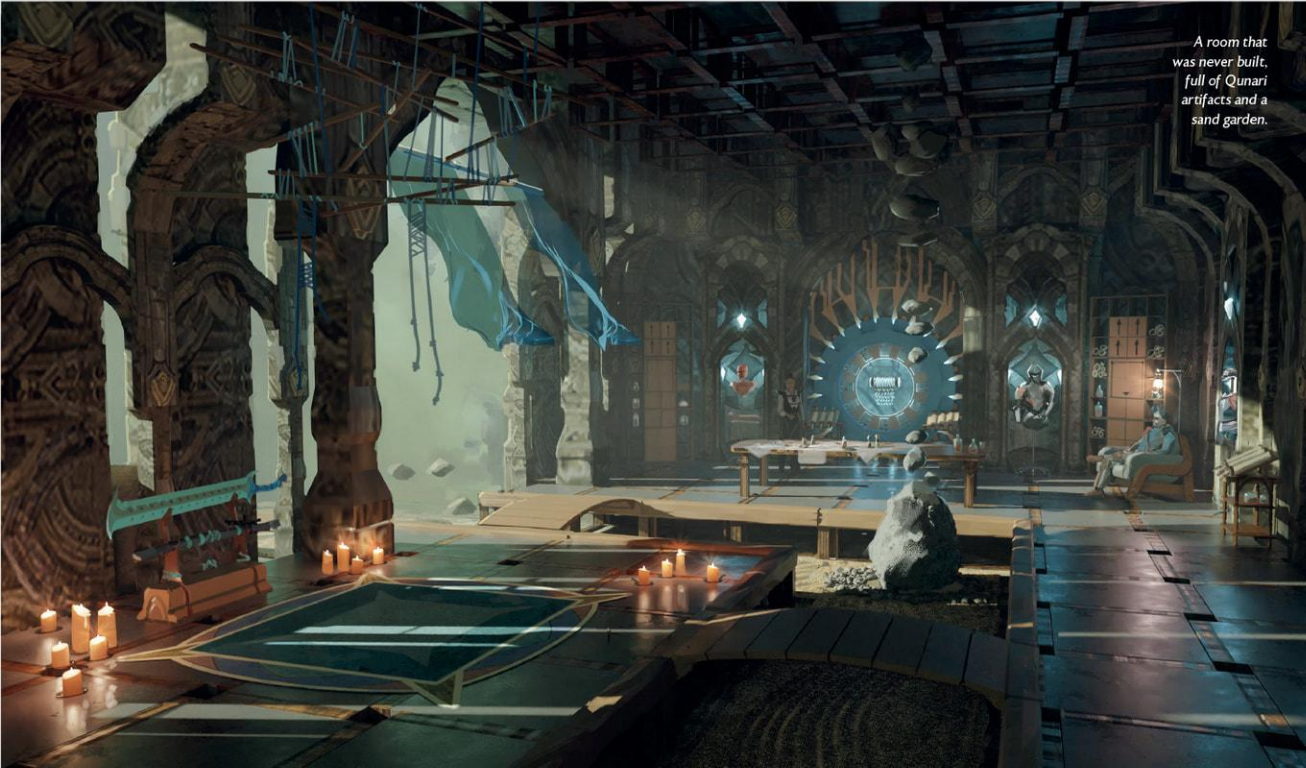
Dragon Age: Inquisition *had the war table with your three advisors. For* Veilguard, *we created a less formal table, surrounded by your followers.*

THE HUB

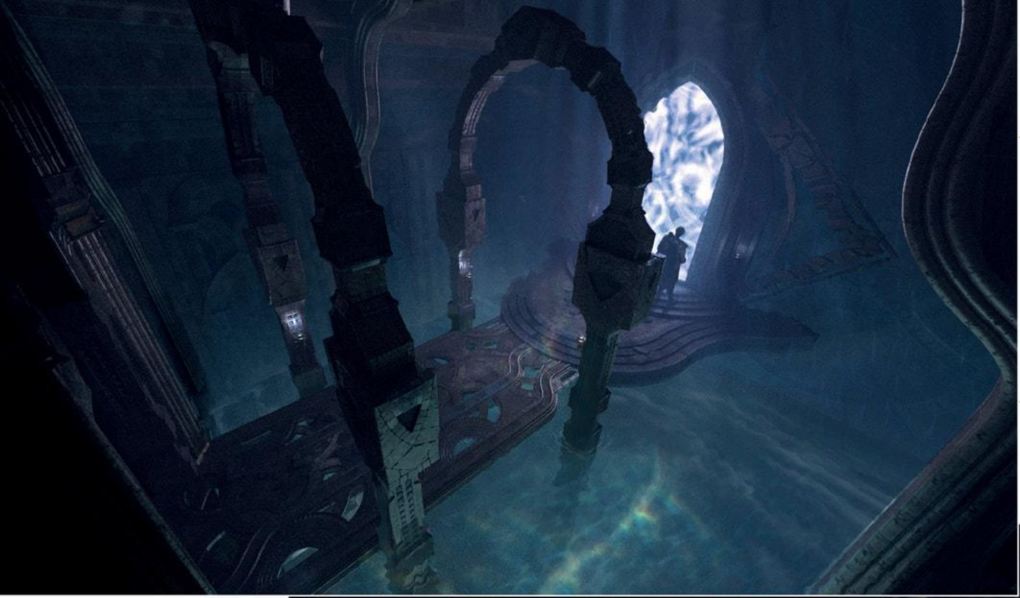
The *most* important aspect of the player base was that it should be easy for the players to use. We wanted to create a very practical space and then wrap a fun narrative metaphor around it. We wanted it to be smaller than Skyhold, so that players spent less time running around to visit followers. The house idea survived through multiple iterations because it solved this problem well.

The kitchen starts with Solas's sad single bowl of porridge and eventually becomes the warm heart of the Lighthouse.



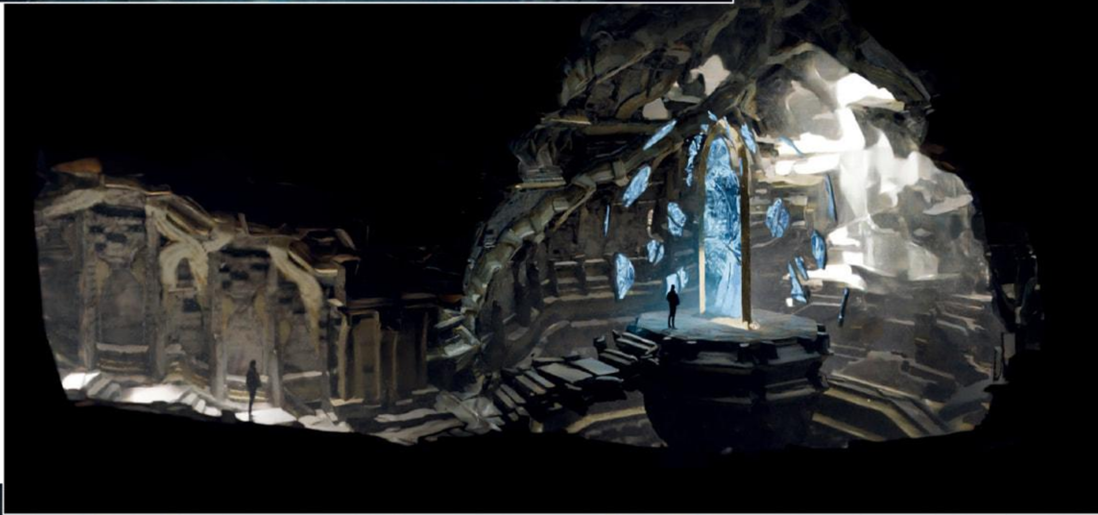


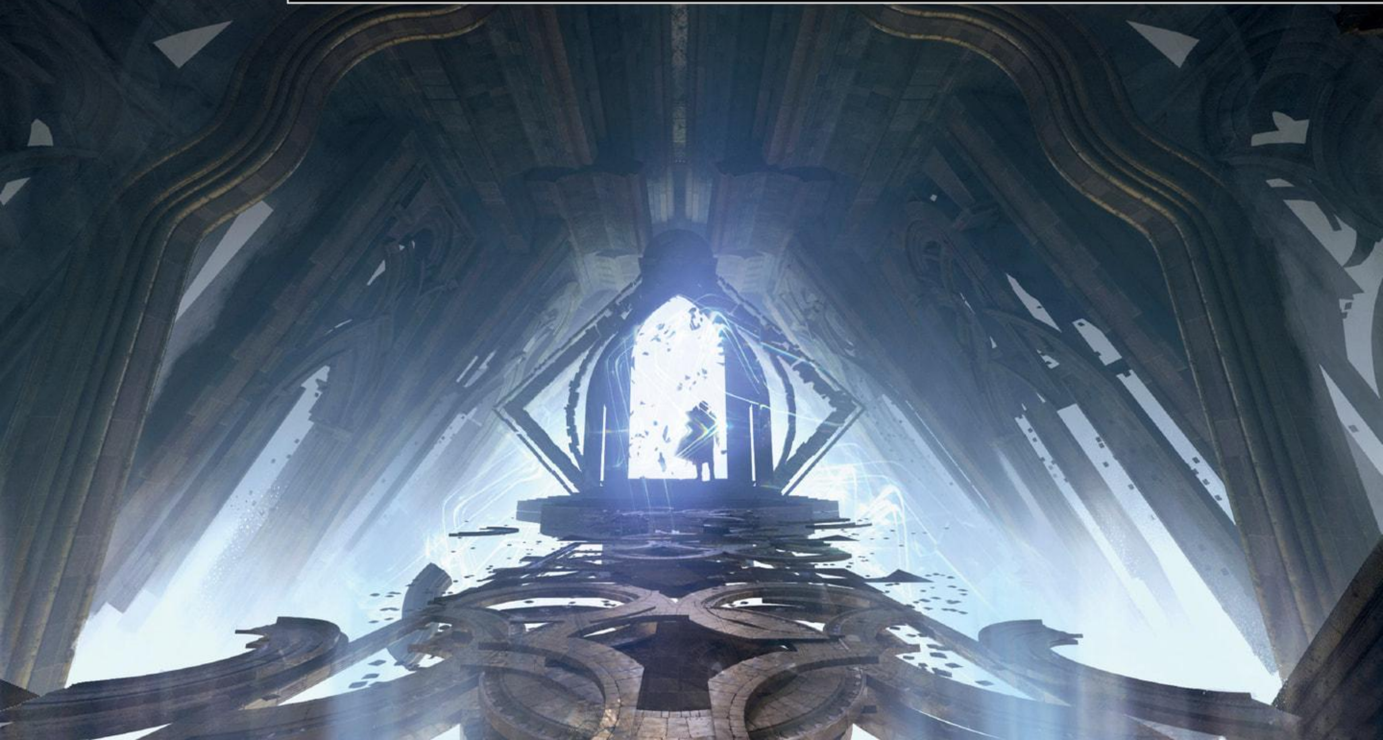
A room that was never built, full of Qunari artifacts and a sand garden.

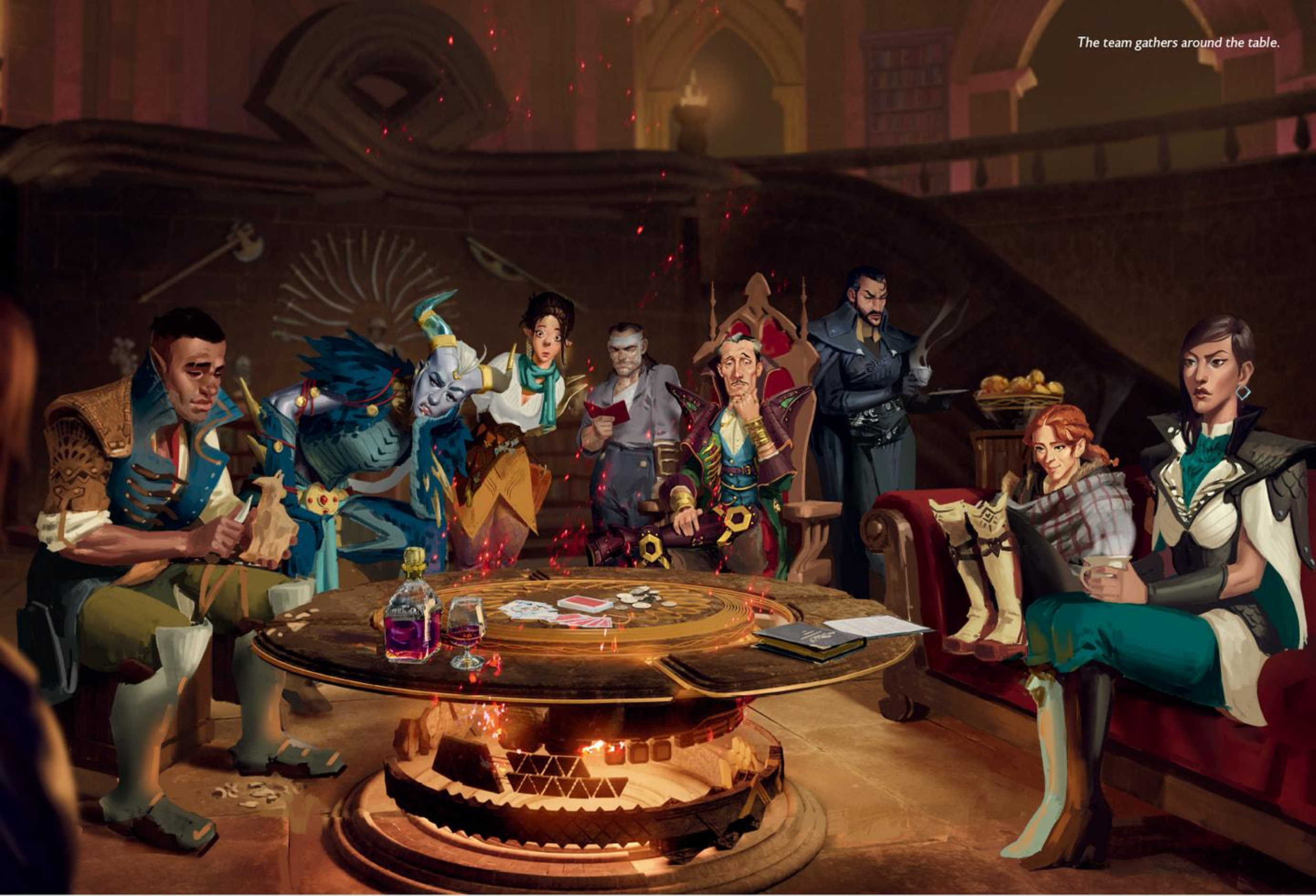


As the story developed, the idea solidified that Solas, now bound in the Fade, would give you access to his secret base of operations. This tied the base to a main character, giving us a chance to explore Solas as a character, like wandering around a friend's house for the first time.

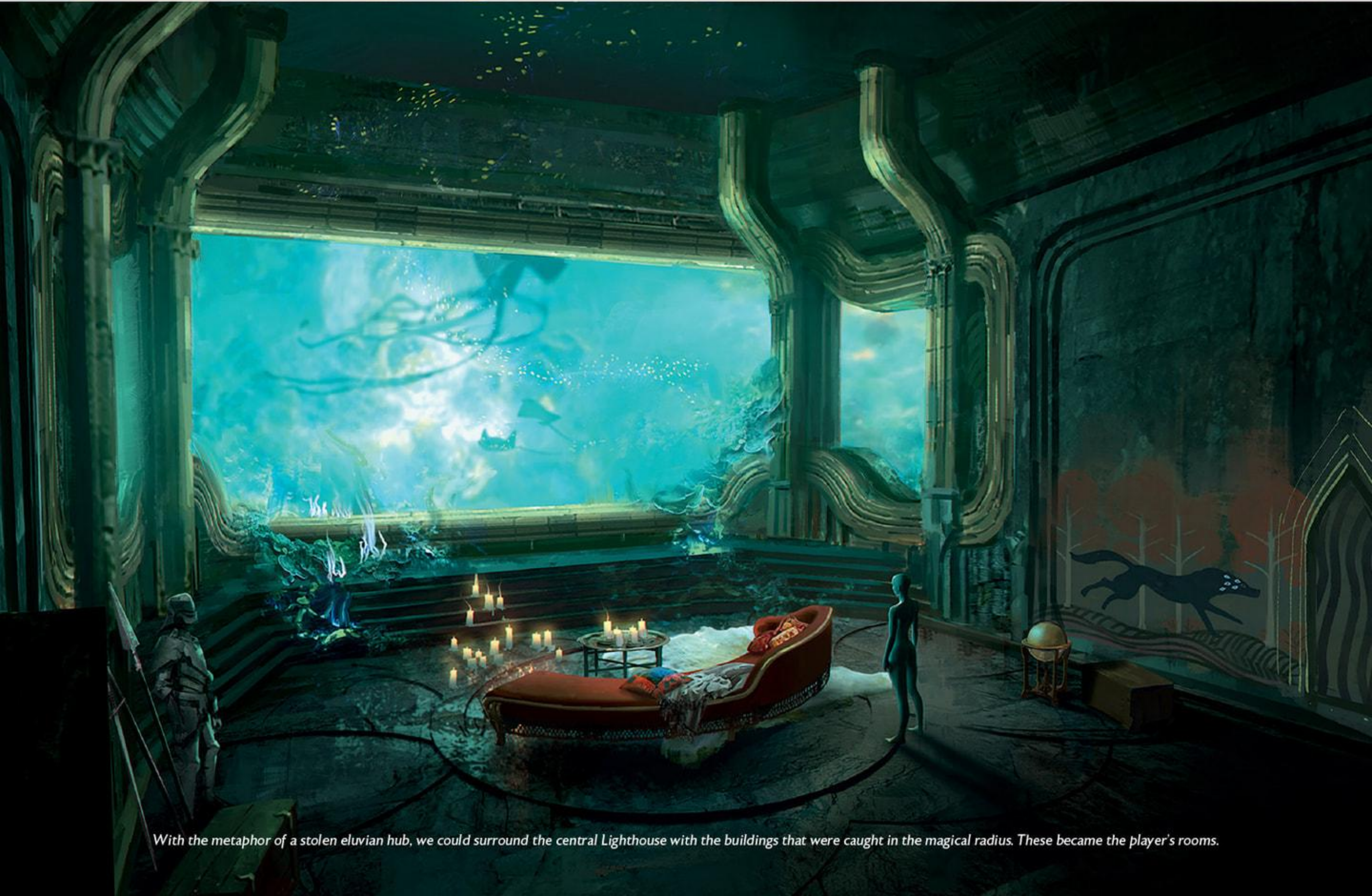
The idea we worked with was that Solas, during his years rebelling against the evil gods, would have used his magic to "steal" the equivalent of a train station and hide it outside of the waking world. This hub of eluvians would have allowed the evil gods to get around their Thedas-spanning empire quickly. Solas used this to fight against the evil gods and, later, to accomplish his plans faster than most could keep up.



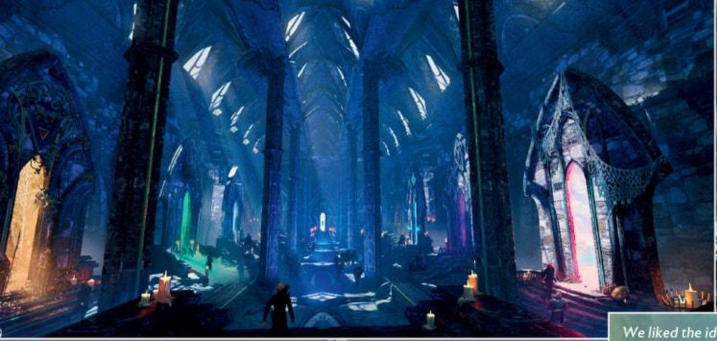


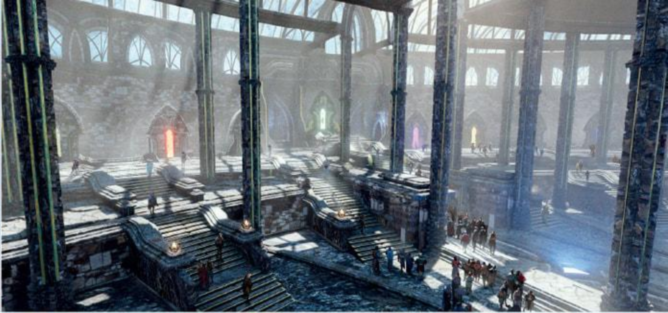


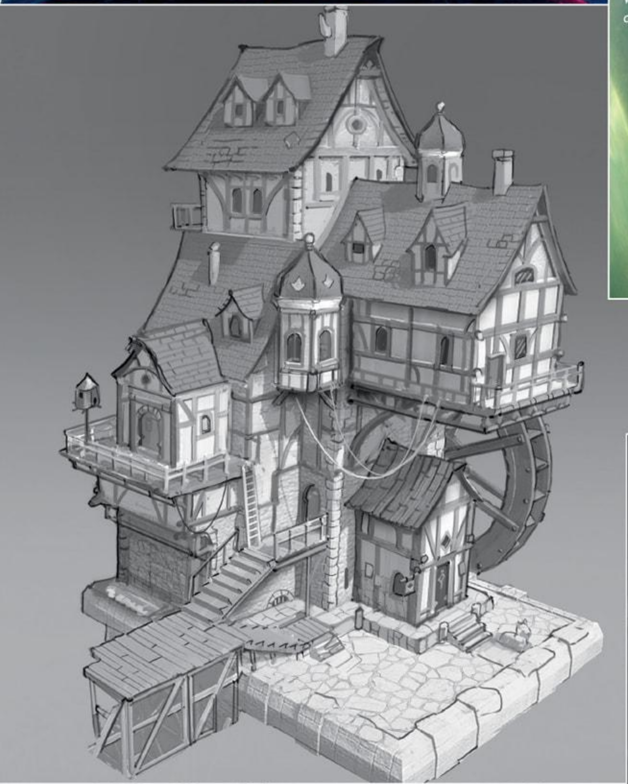
The team gathers around the table.

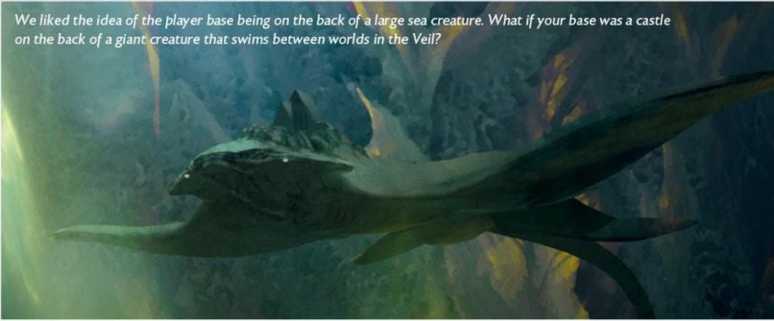


With the metaphor of a stolen eluvian hub, we could surround the central Lighthouse with the buildings that were caught in the magical radius. These became the player's rooms.



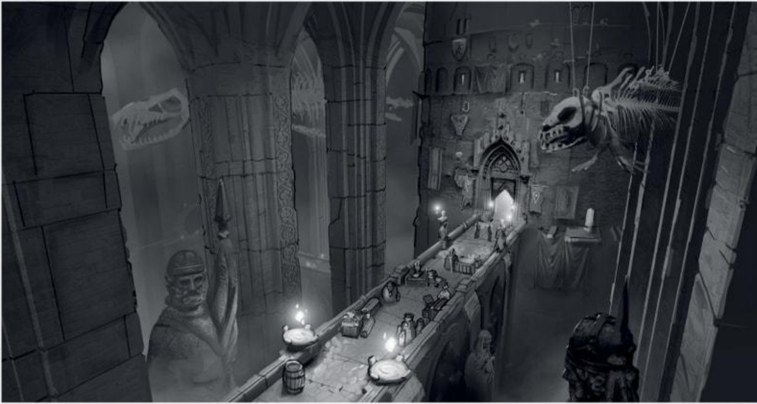


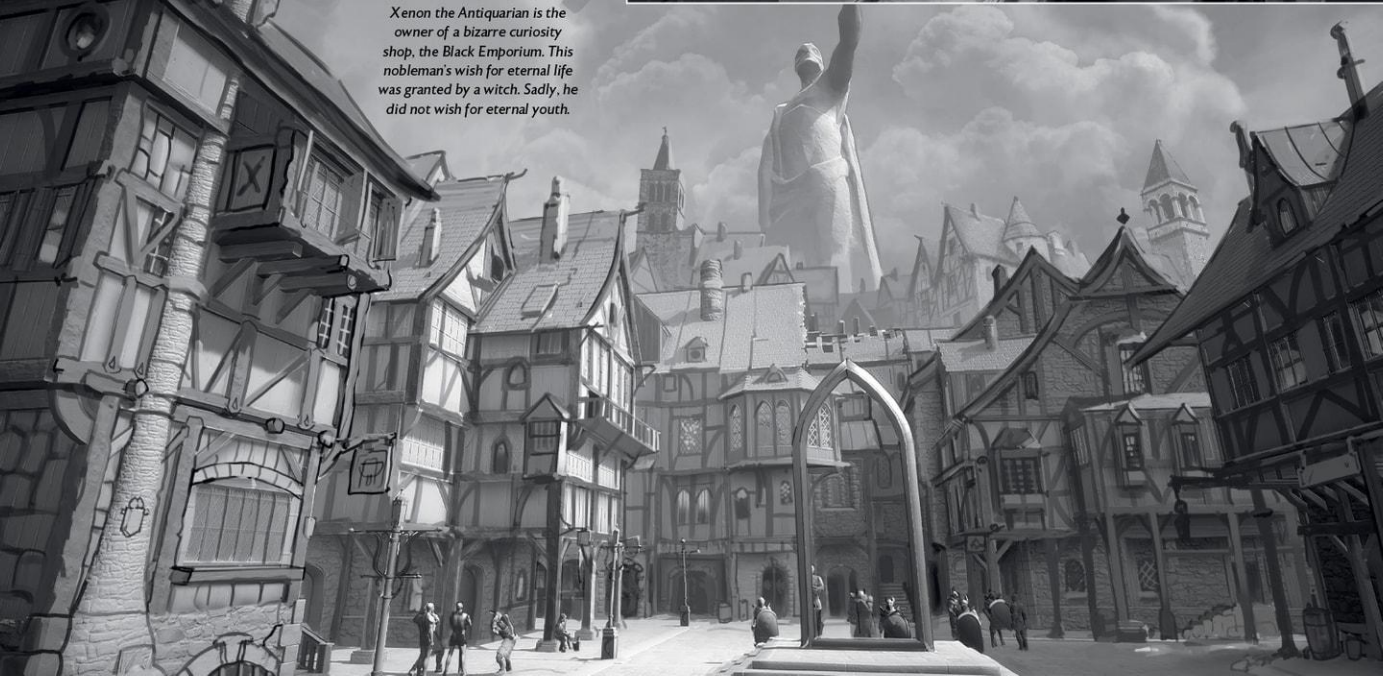




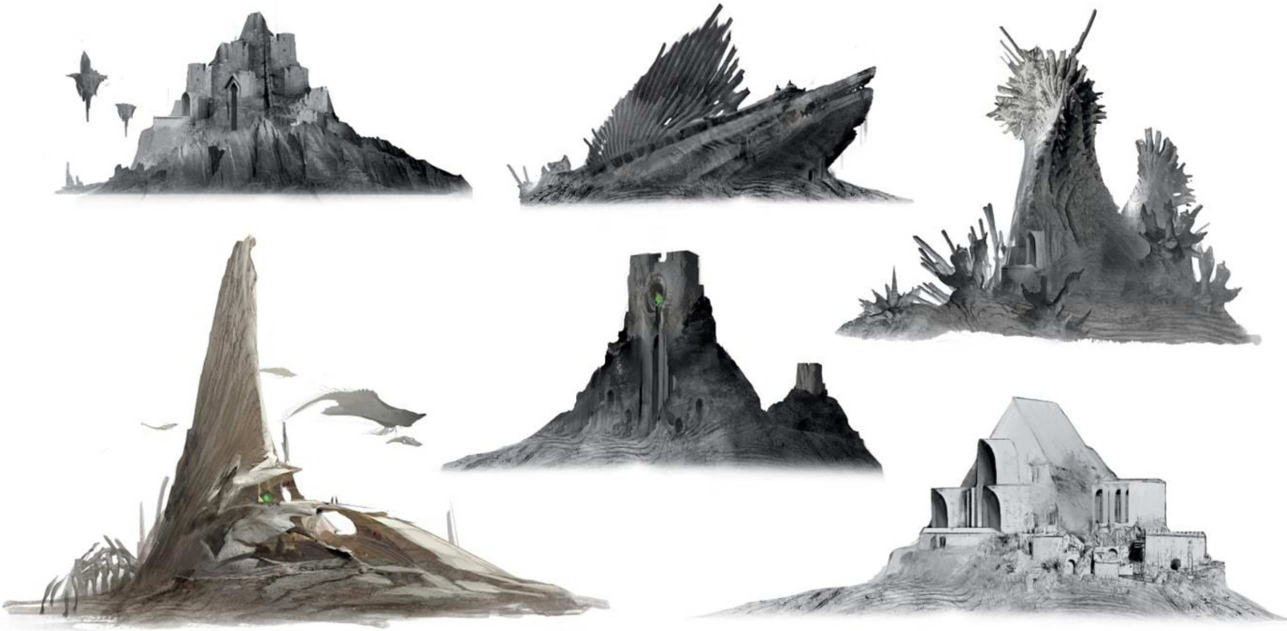
We liked the idea of the player base being on the back of a large sea creature. What if your base was a castle on the back of a giant creature that swims between worlds in the Veil?

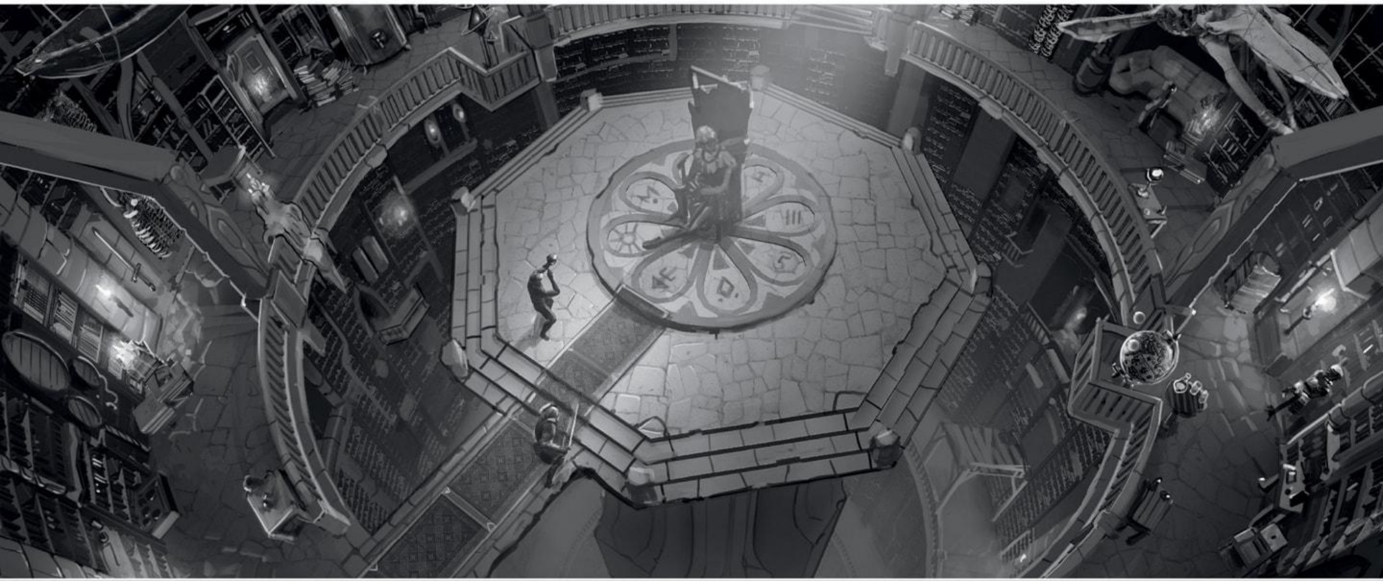
Veil whale and Xenon's: two directions we explored but ultimately rejected.

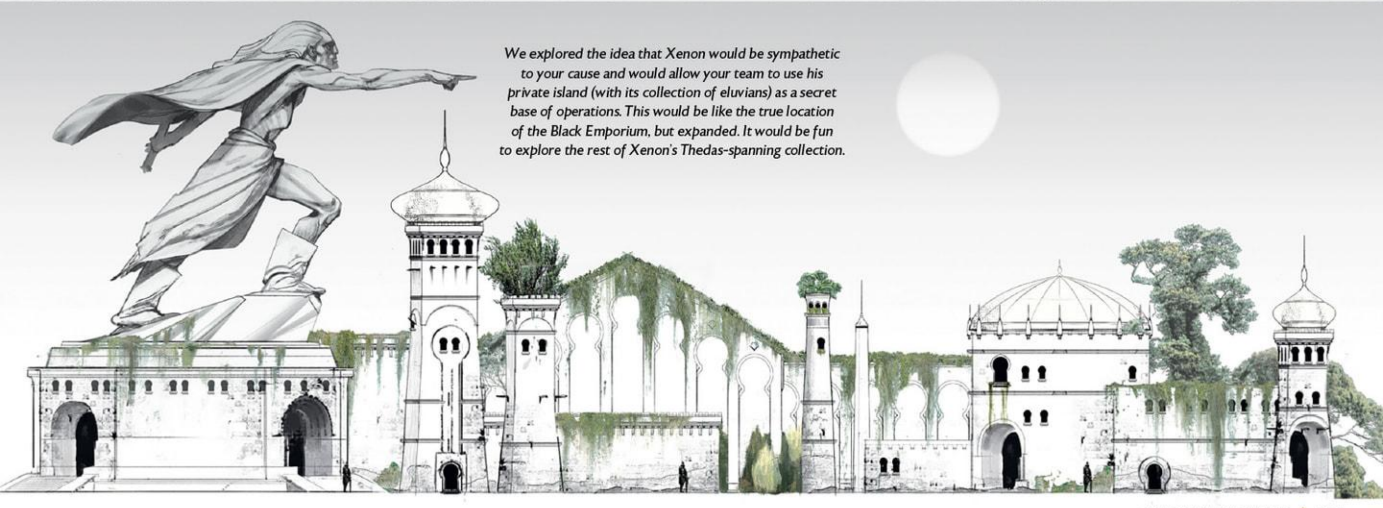




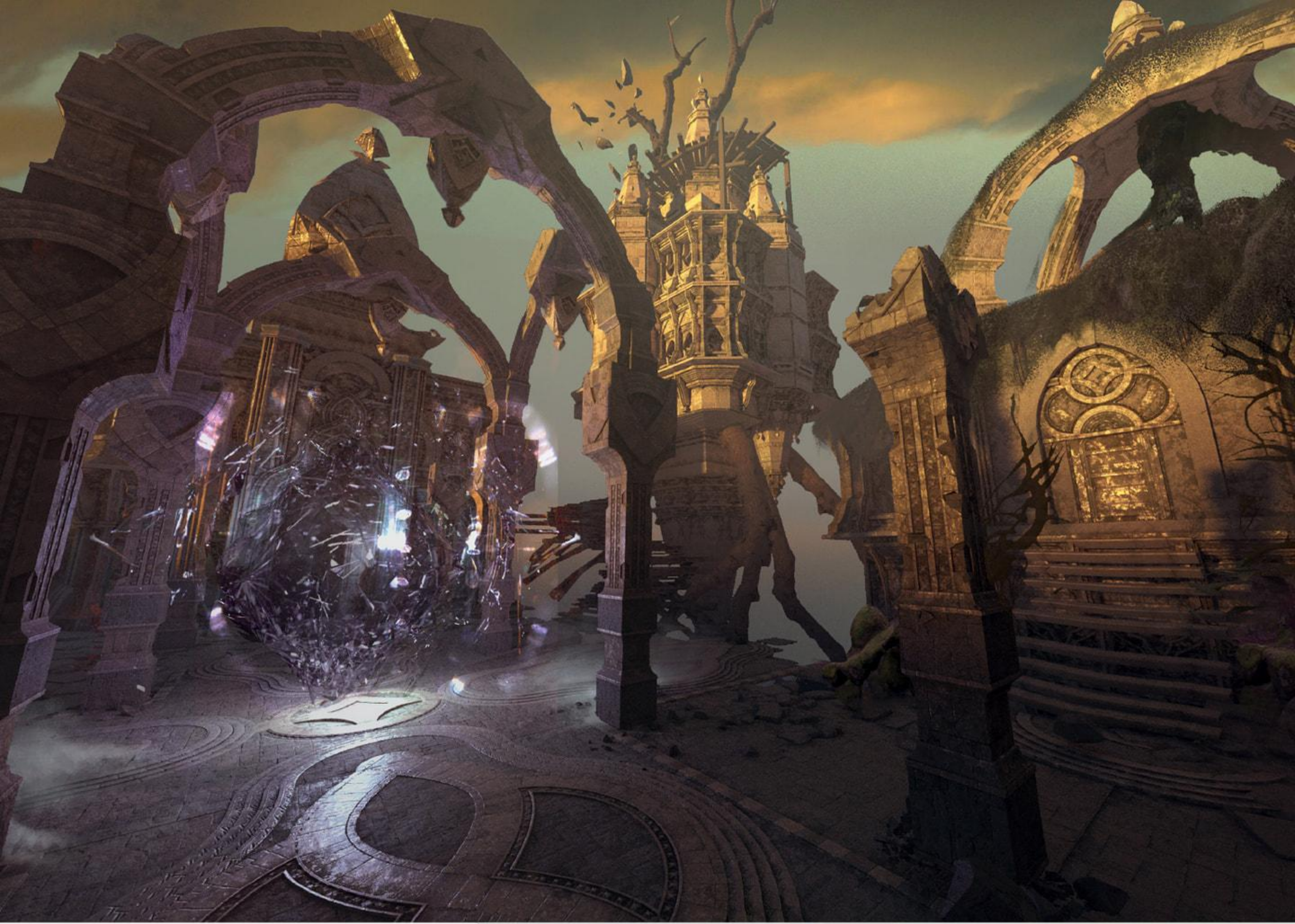
Xenon the Antiquarian is the owner of a bizarre curiosity shop, the Black Emporium. This nobleman's wish for eternal life was granted by a witch. Sadly, he did not wish for eternal youth.



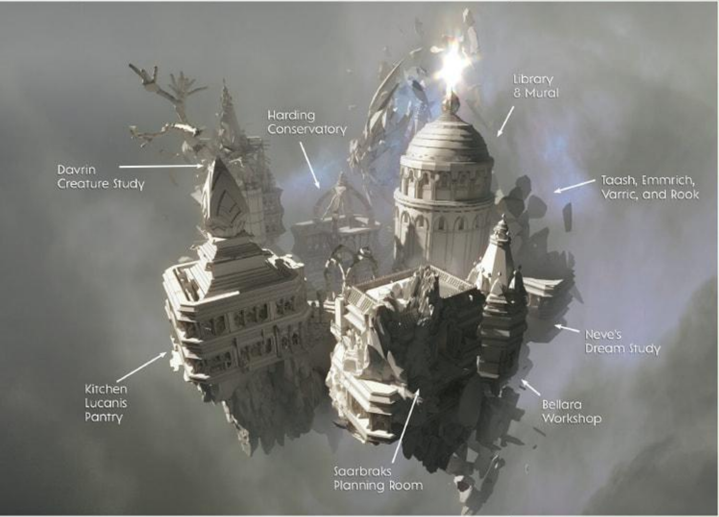


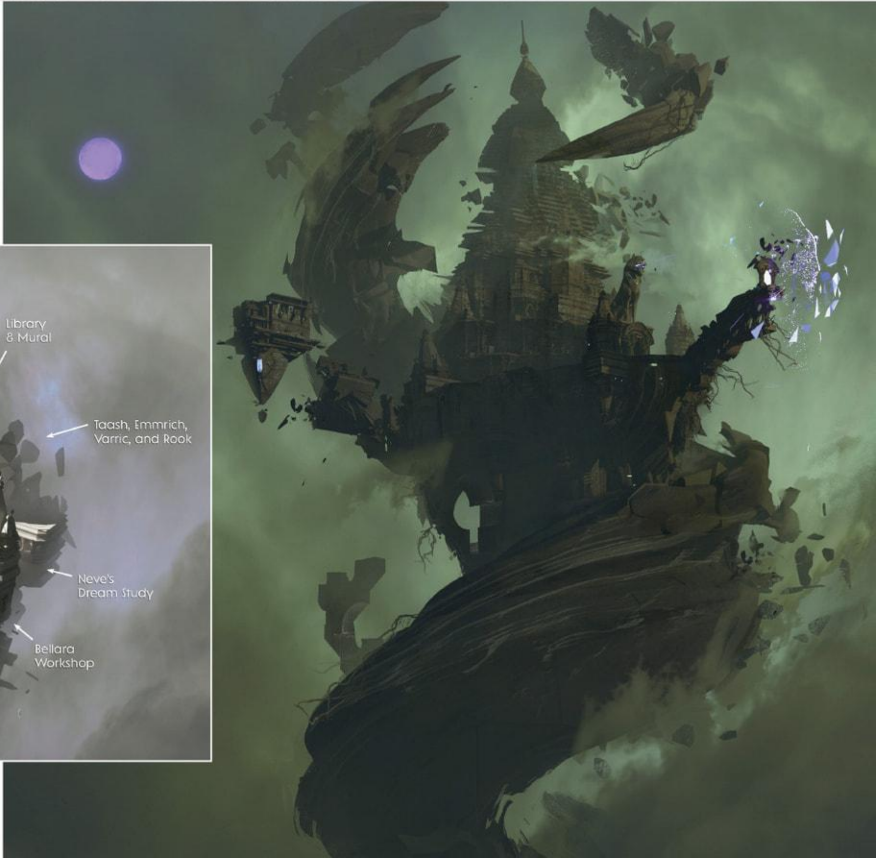


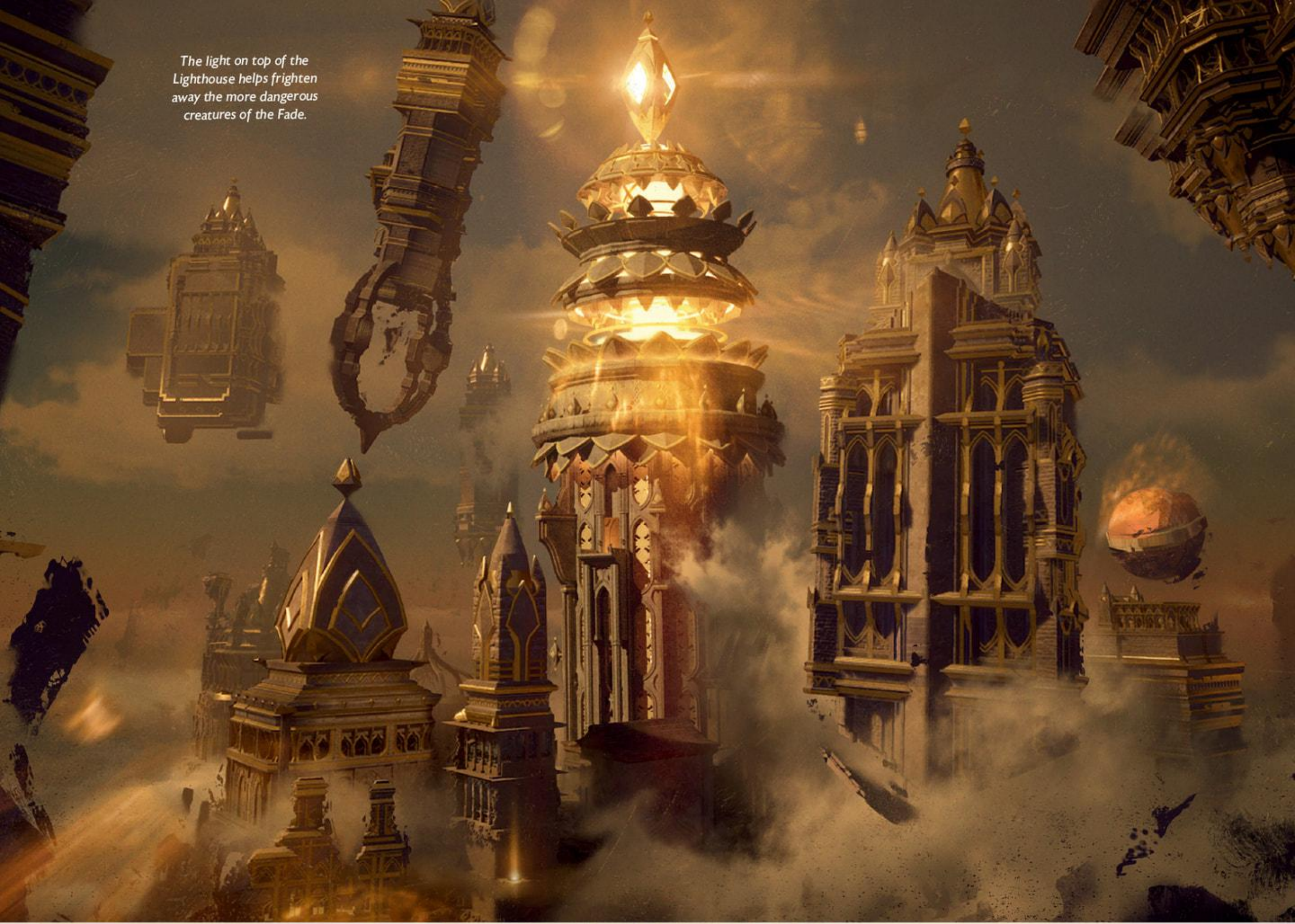
We explored the idea that Xenon would be sympathetic to your cause and would allow your team to use his private island (with its collection of eluvians) as a secret base of operations. This would be like the true location of the Black Emporium, but expanded. It would be fun to explore the rest of Xenon's Thedas-spanning collection.



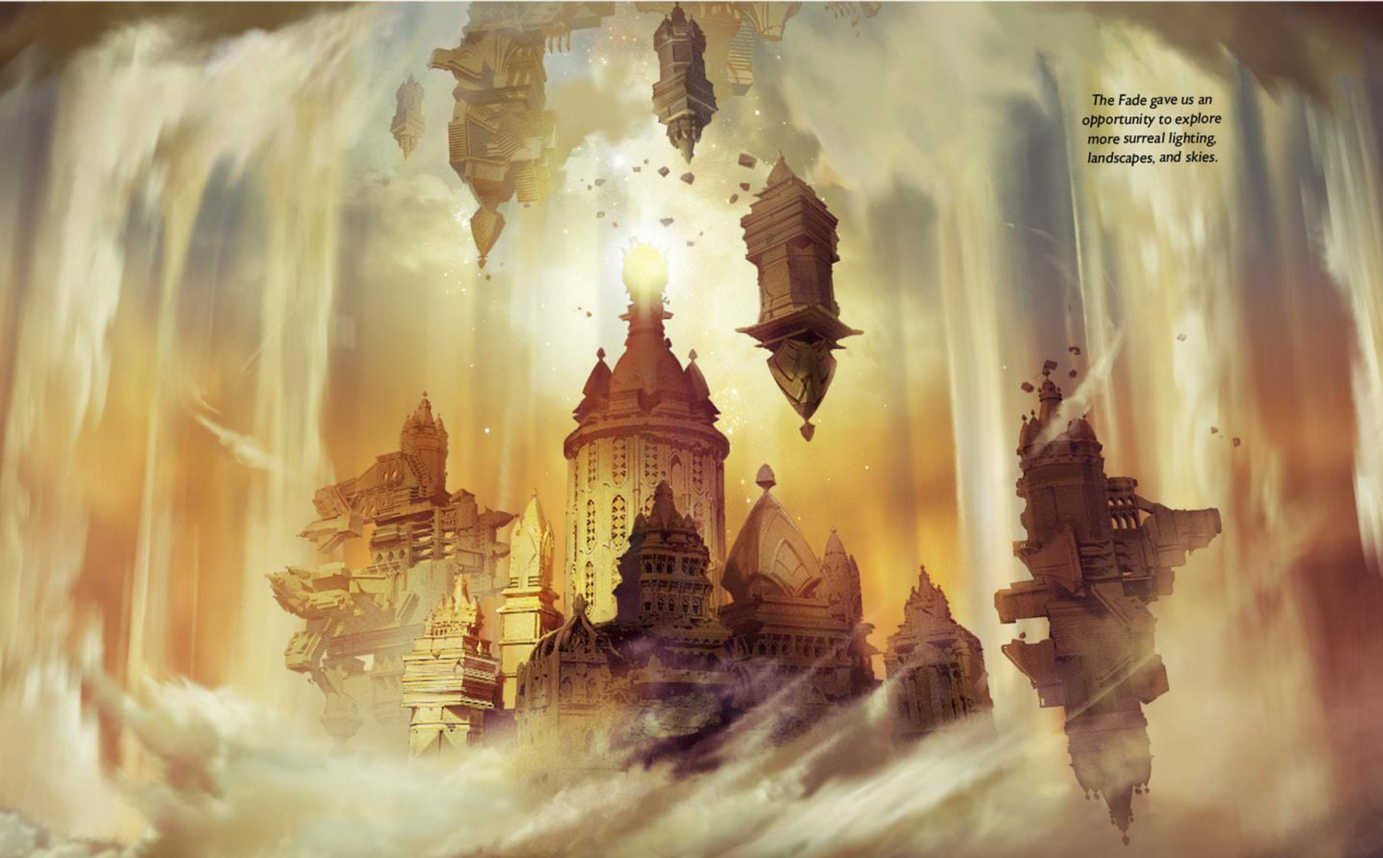
When Solas stole the eluvian hub, a number of buildings were caught in the spell.


Library
& Mural
Harding
Conservatory
Davrin
Creature Study
Taash, Emmrich,
Varric, and Rook
Neve's
Dream Study
Kitchen
Lucanis
Pantry
Bellara
Workshop
Saarbraks
Planning Room





The light on top of the Lighthouse helps frighten away the more dangerous creatures of the Fade.



The Fade gave us an opportunity to explore more surreal lighting, landscapes, and skies.

THANK YOU!

DARK HORSE BOOKS

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